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J. RENDEL HARRIS

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TO MY BELOVED IN CHRIST JESUS

It pleased God, in the days when we used to meet together in Cambridge for His worship and for personal help, to draw us unitedly very close to Himself, so that few of us are likely to forget the seasons of refreshing which we enjoyed from His presence; and if, by His good providence, any of us meet in these later days, one of the readiest sentences to rise to our lips is the word, "Do you remember?" The papers which make up this little volume were originally designed to the same end, the remembrance of one another, and of the truths which God taught us. How often were the pencilled notes of one and another put into my hand after some bright and happy meeting, that a few copies might be made and

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circulated! It is more than fourteen years since this was first done, and the latest fragment of this book is more than ten years old. You can see the creases of time in them, and, indeed, they were never properly rounded. Take them, however, collected and reprinted, as a token (the only token I can give) that the moth and rust of time have not eaten away the affection which I had for you all, and that those two thieves, Change and Death, which were so early busy with us, have not been able to undermine the house of our Love, nor abstract the treasure of our common Faith.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

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GOD THE GOD OF THE LIVING

I AM afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Who is like unto Thee, O most mighty LORD, for verily Thy truth is on every side. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there. If I go down unto the dead, Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. Therefore when I sleep in the grave, I am in Thy cradle; and when I shall arise up and awake, behold around me are Thy everlasting arms.

So not alone we land upon that shore:
'Twill be as though we had been there before;
We shall meet more we know
Than we can meet below,
And find our rest like some returning dove,
And be at home at once with our Eternal Love.

I

GOD THE GOD OF THE LIVING[1]

"Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not a God of dead men, but of living men, for all live unto Him."—LUKE xx. 37, 38.

IT is very likely that some of us may have been perplexed in the study of this passage at the answer which the Lord Jesus gave to the Sadducees, and doubtful as to whether their difficulties and questions were fairly met by the text that He quoted.

Certainly if we had been told to search the Scriptures for passages bearing on the Future Life and the doctrine of the Resurrection, this is about the last text that we should have thought of

[1] *In Memoriam, Arthur George William Neale, B.A.* (*St. John's College*), *who passed through the veil* 1st *July* 1880. *Aged* 22 *years.*

adducing ; we should never have detected in these verses a key that would unlock the closed doors between two worlds and make sunlight be where previously all was dark.

And even if we had been pointed to this passage containing the revelation of God at the bush, we should probably only have seen in it another of the magnificent affirmations of the Divine self-existence, another of the grand "I Am's" which sound forth at times from the mount of cloud and vision. We might even have gone so far as to see how much more wonderful it is to have a faith in which, with wonderful simplicity, God says "I Am," than merely to have a religion which affirms "He is," and we should have been glad that at any time there were men to whom God spoke for Himself. But we should not have supposed that the statement had any bearing on our life and existence, or that it solved, or put us in the way of solving, some of the questions that perplex us. Perhaps the principal reason for this lies in the words of Jesus Himself: "Ye do not understand the scriptures nor the power of God."

And yet ought we not to be aware of this, that

every revelation of God involves a revelation about the creature, just as the earth is affected by every potency and virtue in the sun? Revelation is not merely information about God, without relation to our own life and being. For instance: both the Spirit and the Scripture combine to assure us that God is Love. Is that merely a piece of theological information about God of which the universe is independent, or does He not in the revelation spread His wide pinions over all creatures that He has made and gather them together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings? Out of such a revelation the willing soul discerns the New Jerusalem descend as a bride adorned for her husband; the eager soul receives, the wayward soul returns, the sorrowful soul is comforted. No revelation of God is possible that is simply information without a bearing on my history, my existence, my future. And so with our text we may say the "I Am" of God involves the "I shall be" of the creature. If one comes to me and says, "I was your father's friend," it may be either (i.) that my father is dead, or (ii.) that there has been a change in the affection of the person speaking;

but if he comes to me and says, "I am your father's friend," he implies two things: the existence of my father and the permanence of his own love for him; and the one just as much as the other. So when God says, not "I was the God of Abraham," but "I am," etc., He is not merely asserting His own existence and providence, but the continued life of the faithful of ancient days. And so the "I Am" of God proclaims the "I am" of the creature; the soul looks down the sloping years and says of its prospect, "God is, and I am." And Christ's answer to the Sadducee comes to this: "You are inconsistent in denying the future life; you ought first to have denied the being of God; but as long as He is, beat His saints small as the dust, scatter them to the four corners of the earth, yet He will send forth His angels and gather His elect again from the four winds, and lo! they are sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God: for He is not the God of dead men, but of living men; and all live unto Him!"

Those who believe in God can easily take heart to look through the mysteries of life and death and to discern glory through the gloom; but the

Sadducee did not stand in the line of the sunbeams that come from the other world; no wonder it was dark to him.

Not but what our life is full of mysteries: birth and death alike perplex us; the "Whence" and the "Whither."

He who has studied well his coming and his going, has written out two books of his Bible: the Genesis and Exodus of his book of life.

Birth and death are alike mysterious; they are something like the vails of the ancient tabernacle, each curiously wrought of purple and scarlet and fine twined linen, but the vail of the most holy place had in addition cunning work and tracery of cherubim. So with our birth and dying—we may learn much from either; but death has the greater wonders traced upon its vail, if we could but get into the right light to read them. There is this difference, too, that, while the first vail is moved aside that we may enter, and closes behind us so that we may not tell from whence we came, the second vail is not drawn back but rent from top to bottom, so that we do not lose our sight of the world that is when we are made a part of the world that is to come.

It is through this rent vail that we are looking to-day.

It has pleased God that the first-fruits of our meeting should be laid upon the altar; He has called our dear Arthur Neale to Himself. Already it has been said over him, "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust"; it remains for us to take up our testimony and say, "and soul to soul."

Dear Arthur Neale! it has been said that "one cross can sanctify a soul," and he had many crosses; chiefest of all the fear of death. He was something like Bunyan's Mr. Fearing, only his fear was physical, and not produced by doubts as to his final acceptance. But it was grand to see how, at the last, this fear of death, which is, in its very nature, a solicitude for self, was transformed to care for others; just before he passed away, he turned to the dear one watching beside him and asked if she was afraid to see any one die.

Now let me read you a little about Mr. Fearing.

"When he was come to the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, I thought I should have lost my man; not for that he had any inclination to go back: that he always abhorred;

but he was ready to die for fear. . . . But this I took notice of, that this valley was as quiet when he went through it as ever I knew it before or since. I suppose these enemies had a special check from our Lord, and a commandment not to meddle until Mr. Fearing was passed over it. . . . When he was come to the river, where was no bridge, he was again in a heavy case. And here, also, I took notice of what was very remarkable: the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over, at last, not much above wet shod. . . . I never had any doubt about him; he was a man of very choice spirit, only he was always kept very low, and that made his life burdensome to himself and troublesome to others."

He has sent us his last message: being asked if he had any word for friends, he said, "Tell them all, it's all right."

It comforts me sometimes to believe that, as we advance in the Life, the way becomes easier. I believe this to be the case not only with one who has death at his back, but with every one who walks faithfully with God. Jesus says, "My yoke

is easy and My burden is light"; and I think to those who follow Him faithfully He says, "My yoke is easier and My burden lighter every day."

We learn to live with God until it becomes impossible to live without Him; we learn to lean on Him, until we acquire an instinctive abhorrence of all broken reeds. We begin with cherubim and a flaming sword that turns every way to keep the way of the tree of life; but we end with the same flashing armoury turning us from every path except that which leads to glory and honour and immortality and the city of God. We begin with "He shall give His angels charge against thee," but we end with this, "He giveth His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Such guidance and keeping is heaven; such, too, is heaven on earth.

I have kept a few of his letters from which I should like to read you a few sentences:—

23rd December 1878.

. . . Thoughts seem to go almost instinctively from the cold weather to the apparent state of spiritual life in

the congregations of which I have been a very unwilling member (*i.e. pro tem.*, *D.V.*)—the latest invention is a system of feeding souls on historical facts dressed up in flowery English—perhaps this sounds harsh and resentful; perhaps others have not found it such bad food after all.

9th January 1879.

. . . I do not know that I can tell you anything more than is contained in two sentences from the Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family: "I feel an atom—but an atom in a solid, God-governed world, where truth is mightiest; insignificant in myself as the little mosses which flutter on these ancient stones; but yet a little moss on a great rock which cannot be shaken—the rock of God's providence and love." "God's common gifts are His most precious; and His most precious gifts—even life itself—have no root in *themselves*; not that they are *without* root: they are *better* rooted in the depths of His unchangeable love. Henceforth let me be content with the only security Dr. Luther says God will ever give us—the security of His presence and care." "I will never leave thee." And yet one longs to be less than moss, to be a part of the rock itself; that it may not be I that live, but Christ that liveth in me—that death might be swallowed up of life.

7th March 1879.

. . . It seems that I'm beginning to learn that it is little use expecting to get messages for others, or be able to help

them or speak a word in season unless "we make mention of them *continually* in our prayers," and give up trying to monopolise the Holy Ghost for particular times; *i.e.* the Holy Ghost objects to being a respecter of persons at any time. It remains therefore to pray for you strongly that you may be filled with a knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding quite up to the mark of "rejoicing alway," for this is the will of God concerning us. . . . The verse that brings me soonest to the self-despair point is this: "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, *because as He is, so are we in this world*"; the standpoint of "workers together with God" is a strong one—"it lifts, it bears my drooping soul." To do the will of God, surely this is to abide for ever. . . .

8th February 1880.

He begins with two Scripture quotations: one from the Septuagint—"the Lord preserveth the infants," in the English "the Lord preserveth the simple"; the other—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

It has been an experience of the past week, which I am now beginning dimly to recognise, that the child and the child-spirit are necessary elements of the presence of the kingdom—as necessary as they are for *entrance into* the kingdom.

And the kingdom consists in the keeping; in conscious, clearer, simpler on-leading in the life of Christ. I am kept because I am a child—when I cease to be kept it is because I become a rebellious child; and of this kingdom and peace there has been no end to-day—there is therefore no hindrance (save a divided will) to its continuance, and thus one is led into the faith of the Son of God—that *our brothers are not orphans*, and that prayer and work must in this faith overcome the world.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be present continually to energise in us this faith, and to work in us all the good pleasure of His will.

And so, beloved friends, with these words of his own we conclude our testimony to him; we keep this Memorial of the Blessed Dead, not sorrowing, as those do who have no hope; if we grieve at all, it is that our love was so sparing of the spikenard wherewith we should have anointed him to his burial.

Requiescit in pace.

"Thou hast made him most blessed for ever, Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance."

BELIEVING AND BECOMING

II

BELIEVING AND BECOMING

"To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."—JOHN i. 12.

JOHN soon gets away from abstract theology and takes the soul up into the mount of contemplation, from which it may discern the length and breadth of the land of promise and privilege. He knew that our faith was not only "Emmanuel, God with us"; but that if we had the skill and could read the word backwards, we might say,—"and we also with God." He begins his Gospel, "the Word was with God"; he goes on, "the Word was with man"; and then he completes the triangle by saying, "and man also with God"; for "to as many as received Him, He gave power to become

the children of God." And again, later on, in the seventeenth chapter, we have the thoughts, "I in them," and "Thou in Me," and "they also in Us," until one is left in a delightful perplexity as to the nearness of God to His creatures, and obliged to say that—

> God is never so far off
> As even to be near;
> He dwells within, the spirit is
> The home He holds most dear.

His faith was not merely that the Word became flesh that He might bring God to us, but the Word living and suffering that He might bring us to God; His religion not merely the humiliation of the Creator, but, in a very real sense, the exaltation of the creature and practical union with the Lord of the spirits of all flesh; not only that He for our sakes became poor, but also, that we through His poverty might be made rich. It is into this riches of our inheritance that we want to look this evening.

Do we know what it is to have not only a heaven in prospect but also one in possession, and to see in Christ a High Priest of good things present

as well as of good things to come? It seems to me that in this passage the Religion of Jesus is presented to us in two lights: (i.) as believing and receiving; (ii.) as believing and becoming. Some people stop short with believing and do not receive. But our faith is certainly an appropriative faculty; a sort of hand of the soul that can be stretched out to take hold of God's offered gifts, or to link itself on to God's hand outstretched to guide us. Of what use would a hand be that never grasped anything? Perhaps some promise stands out before us, telling us His Mind, or it may have been impressed upon us by His Spirit. Even from a weak faith we can obtain promises; because faith apprehends the nature of God; and as soon as we begin to apprehend that, we see that certain things ought to happen, and ere long these things shape themselves into definite promises which faith applies. So the life is one of believing and receiving; and as our faith pleads the promises, and the appropriative power of the soul is exercised, we find the kingdom of God come to us not in word but in power. But our religion is also believing and becoming; "that as many as received

Him might become the children of God, even those who believe in His name." Much of our faith, so-called, is only a beating of the air, and not really an advancement of the soul; we profess a great deal which has no practical bearing on our own lives. Yet all true believing is becoming, and a man cannot be a follower of the Lamb, in the real sense of the term, without his becoming moment by moment a different man; he alters his stature, not indeed by taking thought thereunto, but even as the lilies grow; and adding together the receiving and the becoming, we find that we are the children of God.

Hence it appears that our faith is not a single definite act, done, and done with; but one done and gone on with. And our faith is to be not only definite, but progressive and increasing, leading us from grace to grace, from strength to strength, and from glory to glory.

If we take a stranger to view the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, it is possible that he will say that the outside is the finest part of it, and that it looks best from a distance; or he may say that the entrance-hall, with its display of coloured

marbles and polished granite, is the best part of the museum. Certainly there are many that look at Christianity in this manner; thinking it perhaps a magnificent ideal of life, especially as seen in history; or perhaps as seen at some distance, as we view Sunday from the other days of the week. And others there are who think that the entrance of the Christian life is the best part of it, who say honestly from experience that the beginning of the life was the best for them. The reason being that they stopped there; otherwise people never could think that the happiest part of the life was that immediately consequent on conversion; for in reality the path of the just is a shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day. It is not like one of those ancient Egyptian temples of which one reads, in which we pass from daylight to shade as we enter, and into deeper gloom as we approach the secret shrine.

The life of faith—progressive, increasing faith—is a motion in a straight line, and not in a closed curve; it is not like an Irish penance around a sacred well where one makes progress with the final result of being where you started,

and, perhaps, ready for another revolution, as, indeed, it must appear to some Christians whose circle is a week and whose starting-point a Sunday. Neither is it like the pilgrimage up Pilate's staircase at Rome, in which the pain of going up on one's knees is only varied by the discomfort of coming down again and finding ourselves just about where we were before, as it must appear to some good people who live the up-and-down life. It is an upward and onward life; on our knees, if you will, but upward and upward and, like the stairs in Ezekiel's vision, still upward. And the Scriptures encourage us forward, bidding us leave the word of the beginning of Christ and go (not crawl) on unto perfection.

"He gave the power to become the children of God"; the margin suggests "right" or "privilege." Theologically this seems a high calling; but we are not to deny things because they are high. "The devil's darling sin is the pride that apes humility," and this affectation of humility is one of the ways in which souls are constantly kept out of blessing; it has been so throughout the history of the Church. In the matter of the forgiveness

of sins, it is not so long since people said that if a man *knew* his sins were forgiven, it would make him conceited; and some people still hold it to be a presumption; at other times that eternal life, which consists in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, is denied; because it is presumptuous for a man to say that he knows God in the same simple matter-of-fact way that he is acquainted with a friend. And nowadays this spiritual affectation takes the form of the denial of holiness, because, if you were kept from sin, you would be sure to be proud of it; as if God were likely to humble a man and make his heart a temple of His own, and then suffer him to be lifted up over the fact. They do not seem to see the contradiction. The Lord is pretty sure to humble us a good deal before He gives us anything to be proud of. People say it is presumptuous to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke," and more humble—to be something else. Humility is one of those things that lie right in the line of our obedience; or, as a dear friend once said to me,—"the righteousness I am striving after, includes humility."

It is a false humility that refuses those good things which God has laid up for those who love Him. The true humility says, when the Lord has made a feast and bidden His guests, "I shall go and take the *lowest* place"; but the affected humility says, "Oh! it's too good for me; I shall sit down outside"; and so, practically, it becomes numbered amongst those of whom it is said, "They shall not taste of My supper." We need to be like Paul, ready to take our place amongst the saints, though less than the least of them; or it may be among the apostles, though not worthy to be called an apostle.

God gives us power for what He wants us to be; *i.e.* power for the next step; and all our future life is conditioned upon that. We say, "Increase our faith," and He says, "Exercise the faith you have." We must exercise the lower power before we attain to the higher. Suppose there is a powerful steam-engine which is able to do for you a year's work in a day: it is a reservoir of power, but the power is conditioned upon the exercise of a lower power; you must bring coals and fetch water and make up fire, and by and by

the power becomes accessible to you. He that is faithful in least is faithful also in much; we must be faithful to the light already given us, faithful to our powers of love, thought, and obedience, if we are to be brought to the reception of the power in which saints have walked.

Using the marginal suggestion, we have the *right* given us to be children of God. We hear much nowadays of people standing on their rights, —on rights real and rights imagined; we have our rights against the enemy of souls; oh! that we would insist on them, and that we would realise how the powers of darkness fly when we look to God bravely and confidently for the promised help.

What is involved in thus becoming a child of God? Well, for one thing, God is pledged to love us just as much as He loves Christ. We sometimes get the idea into our minds that God loves us in a sort of afterthought manner, as a superfluous or unnecessary part of creation. I have found out that He loves us just as much as He loves Christ; Jesus Himself said—"Father, Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

Was Christ's consciousness of the love of God a mere wavering thing, perhaps known only at critical times; or was it not rather His vital breath and native air? "I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me where I am"; and "the only-begotten Son is in the bosom of the Father."

Another side of this privilege is that we may be kept from sin. Three passages I call to mind in which the children of the Highest are spoken of: one is in Matt. v. 45: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." It goes on—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Another is in 2 Cor. vi. 18; "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." It goes on—"Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." The third is in 1 John iii. 1: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"; and the best reading continues —"and we are so"; it continues with "purifieth

himself as He is pure," and "he that abideth in Him sinneth not."

Finally, does it seem a contradiction in terms to talk of becoming a child? it is indeed hard to turn the streams of life backward and make them return to their source: a long way back, too, for some of us; again we take comfort from the Scripture, and remember that "when he was yet a great way off, his father ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."

GLEAMING AS CRYSTAL

III

GLEAMING AS CRYSTAL

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, gleaming as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."—REV. xxii. 1.

IF we are to understand the *New* Jerusalem properly, we almost need to have been citizens of the *Old*. On this subject, even more than in the general interpretation of the Scriptures, we are entitled to answer the question—"What advantage then hath the Jew?" with an unhesitating expression of "much every way"; for unto them pertained the city of God. For example, when we read, in Galatians, the passage in which St. Paul speaks of the old Covenant, under the terms "Agar" and "Mount Sinai in Arabia," who but those who had felt the galling of a foreign yoke, and the insolence

and exaction of Roman tyranny, could have realised the pathos of the words "and correspondeth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children"; and what citizen of the New and Spiritual City, who had not also dwelt within the ancient and outward walls, could have felt the full contrast expressed in the triumphant thanksgiving that "Jerusalem, which is above, is free"? In the same way, if one would understand the magnificent passage in which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes the New Jerusalem, one would need to have worshipped within the courts of the Old. How else can one see the lines traced in the picture, and mark the analogy between the multitude of white-robed priests and the innumerable company of angels; or see the general assembly of folk gathered for festival from all parts of the land? here, too, are the consecrated eldest-born, and here the rolls in which their names are entered; and, passing within the veil, even in ancient days, one might say, in some sense, "We are come to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the covenant, and to the Blood of sprinkling." So you will under-

stand that the best place to view the New Jerusalem from is the ruins of the Old. It is in this spirit that we want to study the gleaming waters "that make glad the city of God."

Observe, then, that the ancient Jerusalem was not situated, as most cities, on the banks of some river, or the shore of some sea. It stood in a peculiar position, at some distance from either: it was badly watered; we read of a pool or two, of a little brook, of an aqueduct and some other artificial water-structures. Bearing this fact in mind, you will understand how forcible an appeal to the imagination would be contained in the verse of the 46th Psalm, which tells of a river that should "make glad the city of God."

In evidence of the foregoing you may notice the following remark of Philo on the verse quoted (*de somniis*, ii. 38): "The holy city, which exists at present, in which also the holy temple is established, is at a great distance from any sea or river, so that it is clear that the writer here means figuratively to speak of some other city than the visible city of God." It is evident, therefore, that the mention of a pure, fresh stream flowing through

the midst of Jerusalem was a figure of a very striking nature; and we say, that the basis of this magnificent description in the Apocalypse lies in the insufficiency of the water-supply of the ancient city. God takes our outward necessities and uses them as figures by which to make us alive to the facts of our inward neediness, and of the abundant power that there is in Him to satisfy us. The Bible is full of promises as outwardly impossible as that a river should flow through the midst of Jerusalem. The streams of life, the floods of holy influence, the manifestations of Divine grace, shall be for you like that imagined river; and however difficult it may be to believe such a heaven on earth as that indicated to be possible—

> Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
> And looks to that alone;
> Laughs at impossibilities,
> And cries—"It shall be done."

The life of the future, and by that we mean heaven on earth as well as heaven, shall be as different from that which you are now realising as the water-supply of Jerusalem would be if a river

flowed in the midst, from what it is now with merely Kidron and Bethesda and Siloam and Solomon's Pools. So we say (i.) that the Life is not a half-stagnant pool, like Siloam ; nor (ii.) an intermittent fountain, like Bethesda ; nor (iii.) an artificial construction, like Solomon's aqueducts ; nor (iv.) a poor weak puny stream, defiled by the city through which it passes, like the brook Kidron.

(1) It is not a standstill life: no one can stand still who lives with God. If God is the fountain of your life, there will be no green mantle on the surface telling how long you have been in one place. Neither in earth nor in heaven do we stand still or stay where we are. Take up the anchor and the ship follows the tide, and in God the tide always sets one way. You cannot stand still without anchoring to the creature. There must be fresh discoveries of truth and duty every day ; and fresh inquisition made into the heights and depths of Redeeming Love. Abandonment to God must mean advancement in God.

> They who love God cannot love Him by measure,
> For their love is a hunger to love Him still better.

(2) Neither in earth nor in heaven is the Life to be an intermittent one. Some have said that the pool of Bethesda was connected with one of those intermittent springs that one sometimes comes across, and have explained by that means the periodical disturbances in the waters. There is one of these springs pointed out on the road from Buxton to Castleton in Derbyshire, but it showed no signs of anything extraordinary when I was there. However, whether Bethesda is of this nature or not, it is certain that the spiritual life of many believers is too much of the character of an intermittent spring. I want to tell you that there should be no such word as "revival" in the dictionary of the Christian Church: we want "life," not "revival." You hear people saying of certain religious movings—"They are having quite a revival"; alas! and were they dead before? Indeed, I am sure this intermittent fountain expresses only too accurately the lives of many of us. The best that God can do with us is to make us an occasional blessing—a sorrowful thing to confess when there are suffering ones around waiting and watching the surface of our hearts to see whether

there is any moving of the water. I think, therefore, to tell you the secret of the intermittent spring. Every such spring is fed from an inner chamber in the rock in which the rains accumulate; but it is only as long as the water is above a certain level that the outward flow is maintained. If the inner chamber be kept full, the outward supply will be constant. And we know, apart from our figure, that when the inner life is renewed day by day, the outward is no longer an intermittent spring, but an overflowing cup.

Neither in earth nor in heaven has a Christian a right to go below "par" in his spiritual life. I have been trying to imagine what it would be in heaven if angels were to neglect the influx of vital force that comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb; if at any time they were to feel not up to singing-mark or service-mark, what a strange heaven it would presently be; and what strange music with notes wanting,—sometimes in the air and sometimes in the bass. We know, however, that the real character of their life and service is not intermittent, but is expressed in the words, "They rest not day nor

night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.'"

(3) It is not a life for which the world is too strong, and which cannot therefore be kept pure. It is not figured by a little brook, as Kidron, defiled with all the impurities of a city, and that an oriental city. And yet how many lives there are of which we have to say, "The world is too strong for them"; well-intentioned people, but feeble in grace, and who have received but little of the Life of God. The cup was indeed put into their hands, but they were afraid to drink deeply, though the voice by their side was saying, "Drink abundantly, O beloved."

They drink down to the level of forgiveness, and, perhaps, grace; but not down to glory and the receiving of the Spirit; they do not realise that "he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst"; they do not overcome the world; one has almost to make a fresh text for them,—"This is the defeat wherewith they are worsted, even their little faith."

(4) It is not a humanly-devised life, as Solomon's aqueducts. Our faith stands not in

human structures; not in the Westminster Confession; not in the XXXIX. Articles. It stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. The Divine Life is not sect, and it is not system. What is your sect? A pipe whose power of supply is limited by its diameter; whatever we can learn from the maxims and traditions of men, is but a little compared with what we may learn from God directly. The channel of a sect! it is a pipe that bursts when the tide of life rises beyond a certain point. The channel of a system! it is an aqueduct through which, if one stone be taken out, the water ceases to reach you.

> Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be;
> They are but broken lights of Thee;
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

If one travels on the continent, one can see (I think it is at Avignon) the ruins of the ancient Roman aqueduct; but the Rhine and the rest of the rivers of God flow on still, full of water.

> Let names and sects and parties fall,
> That Jesus may be all in all.

As we learn to live the life of dependence upon the Lord, we must not be surprised if a great deal of our early theology drops off: it does not always sit down with us in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Instead of Solomon's pools and aqueducts there is given to us a pure river of water of life, gleaming as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb; and I think we may say of those who receive the life of God in this immediate and wonderful manner, that "not even Solomon, in all his glory, was so well supplied as one of these."

Finally, we may say, that the Life is one of absolute dependence, and is conditioned on the sovereignty of God and of the Lamb. Grace and the Holy Ghost are the portions of the dependent soul: they only flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. I am amazed to find how much of true religion may be resolved into that one word "dependence." I can remember the time when I could not enter into the Psalm, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me"; nor sing the verse,

"I would be treated as a child, and guided where I go." Now it is, I hope, different. Moreover, we are sure that this spirit of dependence is one of the main features of the angelic life; we cannot imagine it otherwise; for the source of the river is the throne.

We sang in our hymn the lines—

> I know Thou hast my heart,
> And I have heaven;

but we can only sing the second line where we have said or sung the first.

HEART ENLARGEMENT

IV

HEART ENLARGEMENT

"I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."—Ps. cxix. 32.

If we were to study the names of the different sects and parties that make up the "Ishmael" of God, we should find them to be singularly unsuggestive of such a thing as the existence of a spiritual life; nor could we easily infer from the nomenclature of so-called Christendom that "there is a spirit in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Now, this is a very curious fact; for one would have expected that about the first thing suggested by the appellations of Christian bodies would have been some phase or other of the inward life.

But we are not going to spend our time to-

night in discussing sects, or deploring their divisions, although we cannot altogether refrain regret when we contemplate the seamless robe of Christ rent into more than twain, and dabbled in blood worse than Joseph's coat was when his father said, "Some evil beast hath devoured him"; and although it does seem to us sometimes, as we contemplate the havoc of schisms and strife of sects, as if some convulsion from beneath had shaken down the towers of the New Jerusalem, and streams from the nether fires had coursed down the channels of the river of life. What we want to do is to think a little about the true Broad Church; not that branch of Christianity which commonly goes under the name, and which makes one of the instances referred to of the unsuitableness of names applied to religious schools and parties, but the spiritual Broad Church, which is the church of enlarged hearts. The school we want to belong to is the school of spiritual free-thinkers, who are at liberty to learn all that God has to teach them. The true Broad Church is that in which an enlarged obedience to God's commandments is brought about by an enlarged experience of His

love; and His commandments and His love are both of them exceeding broad.

All true spiritual life must widen the soul; the more we live with Jesus, the more impossible will it be for any of us to be narrow. Our littleness takes refuge with God, and His greatness makes its abode with us; we bring Him our unworthiness and He imparts to us His righteousness; we offer to Him our hearts barren of sympathy and deficient in affection, and presently we find the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given to us.

Thus, when acquainted with God we cannot be really narrow; they might as well call the Lord Jesus Christ narrow. We want to be as broad in our sympathies and in our views as He was; and neither broader nor narrower.

True spiritual life will widen the soul in its *possessions*, its *perceptions*, its *will*, and its *love*; it will extend our powers of *having*, of *knowing*, of *willing*, and of *loving*; and, in one or other of these four, most of our life is included.

(1) How very little we possess, both in outward and inward things. This is one of the points

in which we are disposed to agree with the saying that the circumference of our circle is very near to the centre. We can grasp very little. Our hands are small and the world is large.

"Tell me how I can make my broad acres more broad," is the request of the rich man. "Tell me how I can make my narrow holding less narrow," is the cry of the poor. But a life in God makes us rich, for "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come;—all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

And Madame Guyon says, "Have I not infinitely more than a hundredfold, in so entire a possession as Thou my Lord hast taken of me, in

that unshaken firmness which Thou givest me in my sufferings, in a perfect tranquillity in the midst of a furious tempest that assails me on every side, in an unspeakable joy, enlargedness, and liberty which I enjoy in a most strait and rigorous captivity?"

(2) How trifling is our knowledge! Yet fewer people will assent to the lack of knowledge, for many think they know a good deal. As in the times of Socrates, it is only the wise man who knows he knows nothing. And yet how little we know! We know but little of things in this world, with all our sciences and study, and we know much less about God, and glory, and immortality, and the spirits which live outside the tent of this mortal flesh, or of any of those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." And with all our books of theology and treatises on spiritual life, we are almost obliged to say that "all is less than nothing and vanity." But we believe that for those whom God enlarges, there is an unspeakable increase in the perceptive powers of the soul: they are taught things that no one else knows anything about, and that are hidden from the wise and

prudent. There is knowledge for the simple and lowly ones ; for those who, in the spiritual strength they have derived from God, run in the way of His commandments. Looking into the Father's face, and into the Saviour's heart, the soul can say, "This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." And with the knowledge there comes the aspiration that we, "being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints," and to beseech for all souls, "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." And again it is said, "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Is this a little knowledge? All things are possible to you in possession and in perception.

(3) How little is our *will-power*. We often want to do right, and the force of habits or of grooves is too strong for us. We have not enough momentum to carry us out or enough moral force to deny the past and to assert the future. Constantly rises up in judgment the days that have been ; and when looking at the blessed vision of

God of the days that shall be, the past rises up and says, "It is not for you"; and we have not power to deny this, and to believe in God that He will work all the good pleasure of His will in us. It seems almost impossible for us ever to become saints. When we get to understand a little about righteousness and holiness, we do feel utterly inadequate to choose such a righteousness, or to compel ourselves to live out such a holiness.

The only remedy is the Divine enlargement of heart which comes from the visitation of the Spirit. We carry our brokenness to God; we put our helpless will at His feet, and He energises it, and sends us back from the altar-steps, or from the glory where we have met with Him, able to say, "I *delight* to do *Thy* will, O my God."

And although for each one of us there will be a Gethsemane, "a place of tears," as there was for the Master, yet we shall come through with our will unbroken, because it will be the will of God strong within us.

(4) How small is our capacity for loving or forgiving. Many think they have capacity for an infinite love, and would be able to exhibit it if

they could find a worthy object. But I believe our love is a strictly measurable quantity, and dependent on the state of grace we are in. Only those who have the Spirit within them, energising them, can truly love at all. Again, we fall at the Lord's feet, and tell Him we have no power even to be civil to some people, much less to love them; scarcely power to put up the weapons of revenge against some; and even to those whom, like the publicans and Pharisees and sinners, we love because they love us, we have not been able to make an adequate return for the love they have lavished upon us. Then God teaches us that there lies in Him the power of enlarging the human affections, and He enlarges our hearts that we, "being rooted and grounded in love,"—not only in the experimental realisation of His love to us, but also in the experimental living out of our love to Him, and to all that He has made and given us,—are able to "run the way of His commandments." For that is His new commandment, "that we love one another." Our practical state will depend on the enlarging of our hearts. We talk of large-hearted people, but they are not so by nature in

the sense God wishes. It needs a Divine operation and a definite Divine experience to enable us to live out the law of the New Testament.

Thus to *do* more, we must first of all *be* more. This is the Gospel way all through. God never teaches us that we are to *do* and afterwards to *be*. What preachers tell you about dead works means simply that it is a mistake for us to try to do before we have learned to be. You may see a little child trying to lift a heavy weight, and you tell it that it must wait till its muscles are stronger: it must wait till it has *become*. This was the way at the beginning in conversion: "dead works" means that in us there does not dwell force or power to lift the great weight of the commandment or righteousness of God; hence they are useless or stupid works. When you find in your heart your inability to fulfil the Divine commandment, and have not the strength and power you want, though all day trying to lift the heavy weight, you come to God and say, "It is plain that, as I am, I cannot live out this righteousness, and I come for a new life to live it out. I must have Thine own strength." Then we understand our Lord's say-

ing, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

You have lived this out in some way since you were converted; but you have not realised enough the more blessed life; you know a little of walking in the way, but running in the way brings you face to face with something outside your strength and power. It is no use to try and do work which needs a stronger man, unless we can become stronger men. Many make a mistake here; they are trying to live out holiness before they have got the heart-enlarging. But it is no use our trying to be holy, until God makes us holy. We try to take the first part of the verse alone, and then we break down. "My heart breaks down: I can never be a runner." You are trying to live out His commandments, without having the visitation of the enlarged heart; you must get on to definite dealings with God for a visitation of the Spirit; when He has come, you will have the strength and peace of God with you. It seems to me painfully sad to hear people sorrowing: "I know it is my privilege, but I cannot make it real; and although one can sometimes do little acts of

mercy, or even attain to humble acts of faith, the life does not flow on naturally and simply." And *it will not*, unless you have an experience at the back coming out of His visitation.

To do more we must be more; get a new master, be a new man; get a new experience, and you will be a new Christian.

All writers who have spoken of the advanced spiritual life have taught that there is an enlargement of the soul, and they use the strongest language possible.

So we find Madame Guyon saying:—

"This vastness or enlargedness which is not bounded by anything, however plain and simple it may be, increases every day; so that my soul in partaking of the qualities of her spouse, seems also to partake of his immensity."—*Madame Guyon*, vie. ii. 4.

And Philo:—

"Having broken the chains by which it (the soul) was formerly bound, which all the empty anxieties of mortal life fastened round it, and having led it forth and emancipated it from them, he has stretched, and extended, and diffused it to such a degree that it reaches even the extreme boundaries of the universe, and is borne onwards to the beauti-

ful and glorious sight of the uncreated God."—*Philo*, de ebrietate, 37.

So in Dr. Cudworth's sermon, which was printed some time ago :—

"When we have cashiered this self-will of ours, which did but shackle and confine our soules, our wills shall then become truly free, being widened and enlarged to the extent of God's own will."—*Cudworth*, Sermon before the House of Commons, p. 21.

"There is a straitnesse, slavery, and narrownesse in all sinne; sinne crowds and crumples up our souls, which, if they were freely spread abroad, would be as wide and large as the whole universe. No man is truly free but he that hath his will enlarged to the extent of God's own will, by loving whatsoever God loves, and nothing else. . . . He enjoys a boundlesse liberty and a boundlesse sweetnesse, according to his boundlesse love. He enclaspeth the whole world within his outstretched arms, his soul is as wide as the whole universe, as big as yesterday, to-day and for ever. Whosoever is once acquainted with this disposition of spirit, he never desires anything else; and he loves the 'life of God' in himself, dearer than his own life."—*Id.*, p. 56.

And finally in the *Imitatio Christi* :—

"They that willingly and freely serve Me shall receive grace for grace. But he who desires to glory in things out

of Me, or to take pleasure in some private good, shall not be grounded in true joy, nor be enlarged in his heart, but shall many ways be encumbered and straitened. . . . And if heavenly grace enter in and true charity, there will be no envy nor narrowness of heart, neither will self-love busy itself. For Divine charity overcometh all things and enlargeth all the powers of the soul."—*De Imitatione Christi*, iii. 9.

We conclude, then, that self can never measure the length and breadth of the Divine love, and run in the way of His commandment. We need God to make us understand God; we must be in union with Him in order to obey Him. Distances on the earth may be measured by a foot-rule or a surveyor's chain, but to measure the spaces between the stars we must have a base-line in the sky. Only by being partakers of the Divine nature can we live out the Divine life; and no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL

V

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs.

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He saith unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he saith unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep."—JOHN xxi. 15-17.

THE whole story contained in these verses carries us back in thought to the time when Peter denied the Lord. They contain the first recorded words which passed between Christ and Peter since the

latter had said, "I know not the man," and the Lord had "turned and looked upon Peter." He had his special token of lovingkindness at the Resurrection in the message which the woman brought: "Tell His disciples and Peter," in the witness given to himself, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," and in his participation in the blessing when the Lord stood in the midst and said, "Peace be unto you"; but these are, I think, the first recorded words addressed directly to Peter.

Peter had professed to be faithful above others; and now the Lord asks him, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" and the question thrice repeated can scarcely fail to remind us of the triple denial.

If we consider what must have been the state of Peter's mind after he had denied the Lord, we shall see that the circumstances recorded indicate a crisis in his life-history. How the enemy must have come in like a flood! what desolation of spirit he must have experienced during those lonely moments that followed the look of the Lord, when he went out, and wept bitterly! the enemy was come against him in full force, and

legions of evil spirits had arisen to destroy his faith for ever.

One would say to him, "Thou hast sinned against special warnings; the Lord said to thee particularly that Satan had desired to have thee that he might sift thee as wheat. A little later on He said, 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation;' and a sin against special warning is more than twice a sin; and it was that sin which of all others thou didst think to be so great that it was impossible for thee to commit it."

Then another spirit would say, "Thou hast sinned against special promise; for thee the Saviour prayed; but now it is clear that thou hast outsinned the Mediator's grace and the Intercessor's prayers"; and at the thought black despair and utter hopelessness would enter his soul, as if to make it their eternal abode.

Then a third spirit would suggest the thought, "I said, 'I know not the man!' Dost remember, Peter, how He Himself said, 'I will declare unto you, that I never knew you;' and again, 'Whosoever denieth Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father in Heaven!' No word

of Christ shall be broken; yea, thou thyself hast in past time established thyself on the faithfulness of His truth!"

Again would come the thought, "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned; and of every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account in the day of judgment—how much more then for a *deliberate* word, affirmed, and reaffirmed, and affirmed again."

It was as if a judgment-seat were already set up in his soul, and the spirits were pleading him outside mercy; not one would speak in his behalf. Even the promises and the threatenings were against him; the first saying, we strengthened him; and the second, we warned him. Then some voices would testify against him on a side where one would think nothing would have been said, "Thou hast injured the faith; thou hast weakened the brethren; thou hast been infidel against love, and for such there is no repentance; thou hast sold thy Lord at a cheaper rate than Judas!"

"Dost thou remember, Peter, that tree which

the Lord cursed, because, when He had a right to expect fruit from it, it bore none? Was there ever a time when the Master expected so much from thee as this? and now He has come, and found 'nothing but leaves.'"

Then, perhaps, one ray of hope would gleam into his darkened soul—"But the Lord did pray for me, and He never prayed in vain. He said, Father, I know that Thou hearest Me always; and He prayed for me."

And then the spirits would answer, "But the Lord prayed for thee that thy faith might not fail, and *it has failed*; where now is the power of the Lord's prayer? And if that has failed what remains for thee unless it be a certain fearful looking-for of judgment. If even He who said, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me always,' has been refused in His petition; even God is against thee, and the stars in their courses rule thee down, Simon, son of Jonas."

Another bitter shaft enters his heart: "Dost thou remember, Peter, how the Lord said of His own followers, 'I have kept them in Thy name, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition'?

Thou hast not only made vain the Lord's prayers, but denied the Lord's faith, and caused Him to appear before heaven and earth as a false witness. Would He speak like that now, if He were beginning His intercessory prayer again? Would He not have to say, 'None of them is lost, except the Sons of Perdition, the Denier and the Betrayer'? So that even Christ's words failed to meet his case."

"And now, Peter, the high priest is asking Him of His disciples and His doctrines; what thoughts must be in His mind about thee when He takes up His testimony concerning those for whom He has lavished His life! The question will wring His heart anew into great drops of blood."

"Moreover, thou hast sinned against the strongest light and the highest privilege; it was given to thee to be with Him at the most solemn and sacred times: thou wast with Him at the transfiguration in the Holy Mount; and if ever heaven could strengthen earth, thou shouldst have been a strong man. Thou wast with Him at times of special Power, when only two or three

were privileged to see the grace and glory flow down upon the suffering and the dying. Will not the greatness of thy privilege be the greatness of thy condemnation? He always chose thee to be with Him in special times when He went apart for prayer: to whom much is given, of them will much be required. Oh! how hast thou fallen!" and the spirits away in the darkness would say, "Thou art become even as one of us."

Then he would remember how in his own family, almost in his own flesh, he had received special mercy; and that work of healing would rise up to condemn him. Sin against mercy is sin without mercy; a thousand times thou art condemned, having sinned against such light and privilege and grace.

Then some spirits would whisper, "Dost thou remember how when many were leaving the Lord, because His doctrines were hard to receive and His steps hard to follow, He asked the question, 'Will ye also go away?' Who was it that answered so readily, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' Would it not have been better to have denied Him at the first than to have waited till

the light had grown as clear as it has been, and to have deserted Him when He needed thee most? Better to have denied Him then, when evidence was feeble, than to disown Him, known as thou hast been privileged to know Him!"

We are not told one word about what Peter did or where he went, except that he went out weeping. When the morning came and they were leading Jesus away to crucifixion, John was there, but no mention is made of Peter. And yet I think I know where he went, and can see him taking his way across the brook, which so lately he had crossed with Jesus, to the garden of olive-trees. He would say to himself, "Here is the place where the Lord came and found me sleeping"; and "Here He said to me, 'Pray, pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'" Going a little farther, he would come to the place where the Master Himself had prayed. He would kneel and pray there too; in the place where there were still lying on the ground great drops of blood, the earth still wet with the strange sorrow of the Lamb. There, in his despair, he would kneel; and yet even in his despair would be turned towards God. His heart

would be turned, even when he thought it never would be turned again; he would be there, without comfort, and yet God comforting him. Maybe, for him, too, there were strengthening angelic ministries; for there are more of these heavenly messengers with us than we think. Perhaps some words of ancient promise might be brought to his mind by God, as he was kneeling there; such as, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken Thou me according to Thy word!" "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He bring forth judgment into victory." "He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." But whatever means were adopted, we believe that God was with him—comforting, restoring, saving, strengthening him. All this prepares us for the scene by the Lake.

This must have struck Peter as very like another passage in the intercourse between him and Jesus. Strange scene! we are back in Galilee; we experience again a night of fruitless toil. This was my place of consecration at the first; and these nets, which I borrow now, were then my

own ; and it was in the morning that the Lord was standing on the beach, as He did even now.

There is no mere repetition in this story : to a soul in Peter's case the one impossible thing would be that he should ever regain the place from whence he fell. And the Lord was going to convince him, by means of these similar circumstances and the miraculous draught of great fishes, that there was for him, even for him, such a thing as a fresh start ; and that he should not mourn because there was "no returning upon his former track." When the boat had been brought to land, the Lord questioned Peter, not saying, "Thou didst deny Me," but "Dost thou love Me?" and finally repeats in his ears the old word with which He moved him to tread the heavenly way at the first —"Follow thou Me."

There were now no boats or nets which Peter could leave for the Lord, but the whole drama of consecration is acted over again. "Follow Me, Peter ; what thou hast missed shall yet be given thee ; formerly there was a point beyond which thou couldst not follow Me ; but now thou shalt tread in My footsteps, even to the cross which thou

didst fear at the first, and to the shame from which erewhile thy soul recoiled." "Another shall carry thee whither thou wouldest not: this spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

ADDITION AND MULTIPLICATION

VI

ADDITION AND MULTIPLICATION

"He that lacketh these things is blind and short-sighted, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."—2 PETER i. 9.

THE chapter from which these verses are taken describes two arithmetical processes, the working out of one of which belongs to us, and of the other to our Father in heaven. The first is an addition sum: "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness love." Writing down the figures of the sum, and computing the total, we have it set out fair and clear,—"Ye shall never fall." The other is God's multiplication sum: "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the

knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"; and the result of the working comes out,—"Ye shall be made partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." I suppose it means that if we are willing to go on at an arithmetical progression, God would work in us at a geometrical one; and so, patiently persisting in holiness, and hungering after righteousness, we shall be in heaven before we know where we are.

But such passages trouble some folk who don't like to think that a Christian has anything to do in the matter of his own salvation; who say "It is finished" over a work that is only begun in them, and "Jesus paid it all," when a voice within is saying, "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" or, perhaps, if they do not put it quite so strongly as that, they are, to say the least, gravely suspicious of the existence of a creaturely activity in the spiritual life.

Let us settle, then, in the beginning, that God never requires us to exercise ourselves to win His favour, nor calls us to work for One in whom we have no faith. He never says, "Add to your dark-

ness grace; and to grace mercy; and to mercy peace." That would be impossible; for grace, mercy, and peace are experienced in the Divine operation; and it is because we have so received them that we are able to fulfil the commandments given to us. God sets us this sum to work, but He gives us a clean slate on which to work it; He cleanses that inward tablet on which we have been working out quite a different sum, whose total is given in the words,—"The wages of sin is death"; He purifies it, that there may be written thereon the steps and the summation of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Now, some one will say, "Does every one have to go through a process of development of virtues such as is indicated in this epistle, and must every one have them all, and produce them in the same order? May we not develop just a few of them, by a sort of spiritual selection, as flowers have their own colours, and the creatures their own forms and features?" To this we answer (i.) that if you are to be a saint, as God has called you to be, you must have the qualifications and nature of a saint; (ii.) we ought not to recoil from this sum, as if the casting of the

figures were necessarily a long process. No, not long! how long does it take one to reach love? Why, we commonly use the expression "falling in love"; and when the heart is awakened to the sense of the universal presence of the Father, it is not difficult to love men for His sake. As for the virtues, we must have them all. Shall we imagine an impatient saint, called to follow Him who when reviled, reviled not again; an ignorant saint, a partaker of Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; an intemperate saint, to follow Him who was living at a cheaper rate, for a man, than the foxes or the fowls; an unloving saint! into whose heart have been breathed the words, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," or, which is the same thing, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"? Yes, we must have them all. What, will you complain, like little children, because your Teacher has been giving you too many rows to add up? will you say, "Lord, you overrate my powers; you think too highly of the grace that you have given me; I know you, that you are a hard man, an austere man"?

Does it matter in what order we ascend our virtue-scale? Not at all. An addition sum comes to the same thing whether you put it 2 + 3 or 3 + 2. For myself, I would like to begin the addition from the bottom row, starting with love; but it does not matter, so that all the figures are included. The Apostle goes on to speak of the effect of such a chain of experience upon the perceptive powers of the soul; he who has these things, well; his eye shall see the King in His beauty and the land of far distances; he who has them not, he is blind and short-sighted; or, as Luther and the Vulgate render it, is blind, and gropes with his hands. Spiritual short-sightedness is the result of the neglect of the pursuit of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. An indistinct vision may result from one of two causes: a fault in the eye, or an obstruction in the atmosphere. If you cannot make out a distant object while other people can, they will say to you, "How short-sighted you are!" but if no one can discern it, the probability is that something external has made vision impossible. Now, in the things of God, it is almost always the first defect that mars

our perception; and the main reason why "eye hath not seen" is in our own nature, and not because God has not prepared nor revealed such things for our perception. To them that love Him, He reveals; wherefore let us add to kindness love, and we shall know. There are many things to which we are blind, because we have not practised ourselves in looking for them, nor do we know in what direction to look. I remember, when in the Isle of Arran, watching through a mist for the coming of the steamer from Glasgow; our landlady found it long before we could detect it, because she was more used to the quest; her eyes were keener, and she knew the direction in which to look. And the soul that ardently believes and hopes, knows well how to lift up its eyes to the hills from whence its help shall come, and to discern the help when it appears.

There are some people who seem ignorant of the fact that God has given them spiritual faculties suited to the observation of spiritual realities. They are like folks who, if they were put down ten miles from home on a clear night, would never be able to tell you on which side of the sky the sun

would rise; because they never exercised their powers in the observation of the way the skies go round. And not only may we discern spiritual realities, but more than that, it is written that the pure in heart shall see God. For God has not given up revealing Himself to men yet; but this is an age in which, while there are many who know Him a little, there are few who know Him much. He spake to the fathers. He is speaking still. Enoch was not the last of whom it should be said, "He walked with God, he pleased God"; Isaiah not the only one who could say, "I beheld the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up"; Paul not the only one who should be privileged with rapture to the third heaven; George Fox not the only one to whom it was given to say, "I was come up, through the flaming sword, into the Paradise of God." Many there are who have known "the Most High God no vision, nor that One who rose again."

> God, who at sundry times, in manners many,
> Spake to the fathers and is speaking still,
> Eager to find if ever, or if any
> Souls will obey and hearken to His will—

Who that one moment has the least descried Him,
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
Pleasures and powers that are not and that are.
Aye, amid all men bear himself thereafter,
Smit with a solemn and a sweet surprise,
Dumb to their scorn and turning on their laughter
Only the dominance of earnest eyes.
Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny;
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

Yes! things that were seen of old may be seen again; voices that spake to prophets and seers be revived in the innermost soul of God's faithful children; God is not dead; the Lord Jesus has not been raised from the grave to be placed in an inaccessible limbo, far from the sight of believing eyes: the Holy Spirit still speaks, as of old time, by holy men; He has not left the world yet, He dwelleth with you, He shall be in you.

Suppose I were to say to you that if you were to go down to Hastings you would be able to see the French coast clearly and distinctly, you would say, "Impossible even to the longest-sighted

person; it is more than fifty miles away"; and yet, as you may see in the Philosophical Transactions for 1798, the coast of France was so visible, without a telescope, from Calais to St. Vallery, with the fishing-boats, and the colour of the houses clearly perceived. When you hear this, you say, "Well, if it is in the Philosophical Transactions, it must be true, and if it happened once, it may happen again." Good enough reasoning; and the Scriptures are the Spiritual Transactions, the record of God's dealings with and revealings to men of old time. If they are true, He has unveiled the hidden mysteries not once or twice to waiting souls; and what He has done, He not only may do again, but will do, wherever He finds a truly humble heart in which to work and rest. If He stood by Paul, saying, "Fear not," just as really and maybe as evidently will He stand by you. If He guided him in his work, restraining him from preaching here, and calling him to service there, He will give you also leadings just as certain and maybe as distinct. But, do you say, "Are we then to seek for signs and wonders, to fast and pray, ardently longing for the Divine revelation,

until the vision dawns?" I do not say so: but rather add unto your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall, and an entrance shall be abundantly ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A CONFERENCE ON DEATH

VII

A CONFERENCE ON DEATH

"And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of His exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."—LUKE ix. 30, 31.

WE shall not attempt to explain the whole subject of the Transfiguration, but let us consider for what Jesus went up into the mountain. The common opinion is that He went up to enjoy Himself—in search of some spiritual ecstacy. But in this case there would have been no transfiguration. Spiritual rapture comes after earnest labour through eager prayer—it is not found by seeking—we have not to look for feelings or ecstacies; we need "to know the will of God, and to do it."

Jesus went up into the mount to pray about death—the subject which had a little before been

borne in upon His mind—for we read in Matt. xvi. 21, in the narration of events just preceding the Transfiguration, that "from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." When the devil took Him up into a mountain, he showed Him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said unto Him, 'All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'" When the Spirit of God took Jesus up into the mountain, He showed Him the cross, the shame, the suffering,—the spear and the crown of thorns, and said, "All these will I give Thee."

The highest experiences of the Christian life are close bound up, in the Divine will, with suffering. Jesus went up into the mount to get a better view of His approaching sorrow.

The Transfiguration is slightly apprehended and seldom discussed. Very few sermons are preached, or great pictures painted, or hymns sung, on the subject. Almost the only verse one knows about it—

When in ecstacy sublime
Tabor's glorious steep I climb,
At the too transporting light
Darkness rushes o'er my sight,

implies that it is a subject beyond human understanding.

We have hymns on His Incarnation and Advent, His Divine Glory and Worship, His Mediatorial Character and Titles, Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession and Reign, and the Second Advent, but none specially referring to the Transfiguration. Yet it contains many wonderful lessons we all need to know. We have felt, perhaps, that it was an experience peculiar to Christ—with which we can have nothing to do—but the Scriptures say otherwise; the word here rendered "transfigured" is the same as that translated "transformed" in Romans xii. 2, "but be ye transfigured by the renewing of your minds," etc., and "changed," in 2 Cor. iii. 18, "are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory." We want so to look at the glory of Jesus, that, at the same time, we may see His sorrow as well—and be "transfigured into the same image; for if we

suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together."

There is no man who understands the Transfiguration like John Ruskin. He says: "We are afraid to harbour in our own hearts, or to utter in the hearing of others, any thought of our Lord as hungering, tired, or sorrowful, or having a human soul, a human will, and affected by the events of human life as a finite creature is: and yet one-half of the efficacy of His atonement and the whole of the efficacy of His example depend on His having been this to the full. Consider therefore the Transfiguration as it relates to the human feelings of our Lord. It was the first definite preparation for His death. . . . What other hill could it have been than the southward slope of that goodly mountain, Hermon, which is, indeed, the centre of all the promised land, from the entering in of Hamath to the river of Egypt; the mount of fruitfulness, from which the springs of Jordan descended to the valleys of Israel. Along its mighty forest avenues, until the grass grew fair with the mountain lilies, His feet dashed with the dew of Hermon, He must have gone to pray His

first recorded prayer about death; and from the steep of it, before He knelt, could see, to the south, all the dwelling-places of the people that had sat in darkness, and seen the great light, the land of Zabulon and of Naphthali, Galilee of the Gentiles: could see even with His human sight, the gleam of that lake by Capernaum and Chorazin, and many a place loved by Him and vainly ministered to, whose house was now left unto them desolate: and, chief of all, far in the utmost blue, the hills above Nazareth, sloping down to His old home; hills on which the stones yet lay loose that had been taken up to cast at Him, when He left them for ever. 'And as He prayed two men stood by Him.'"

"Among the many ways in which we miss the help and hold of Scripture, there is none more subtle than our habit of supposing that, even as man, Christ was free from the fear of death. How could He then have been tempted as we are?—since among all the trials of the earth none spring from the dust more terrible than that of fear. It had to be borne by Him . . . and the presence of it is surely marked for

us enough by the rising of those two at His side."

It was Christ's first preparation for death—and, therefore, to understand His Transfiguration we must understand His Crucifixion too; to see Hermon, we must go to Calvary; to discern how the fashion of His countenance was altered, we must witness that other time in the garden, when "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down on the ground"; to fathom how the three disciples slept through the glory, we must remember how they slept through the sorrow too.

The word rendered decease is a strange one. It is literally *exodus*—"going out." They spake of this exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. The same word occurs in the second epistle of Peter: "I will endeavour that ye may be able after my exodus to have these things always in remembrance"; and it is worthy of notice that the verses which follow are a reminiscence of the Transfiguration.

We have conferences on many subjects—on peace, on holiness, on temperance: who ever heard of another conference (as this was) on *death*?

A listener might have heard some such words as these:—

First Moses might speak: "I, too, know what it is to want not to die. I did not fear the act of dying, but the manner—away out of the Promised Land. But when I saw the will of my God in all its beauty, then even this bitter disappointment seemed bearable, and the kiss of my God at the last made up for all. Death is only a kiss to those who love God; and if I had not followed the will of my God in this, what had I not lost? I had missed burial at the hands of the sons of God, and my feet would not now be standing in His presence."

Then Elias might say: "I had no fear of death: nay, I even prayed for it, saying, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers. It was not death that I feared so much as the fashion of dying when I fled from the face of Jezebel. But to-day I am thankful that my dying was not left to my choosing; if it had been so, I had missed the fiery chariot by which I climbed up to the Presence of my King,—the swift seraphic march that brought me home."

And then Jesus might say, perhaps, something like these words—

> I wish to have no wishes left,
> But to leave all to Thee . . .
> And yet two wills I find in Me
> When on My death I muse;
> But, Lord, I have a death to die,
> And not a death to choose.

Then Moses might speak again: "Let us call God's providences by their sweetest names: death is not death to those who love God. Thou, O Sinless One, call it not death, call it exodus. It was my lot once to lead the people of God out of slavery and degradation, out of heavy labour, out of the furnace of iron; and yet methinks that will be the true exodus when Thy people pass over, O Lord, Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed, when Thou by Thy dying lips dost proclaim deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; when, through the deep sea of Thy sorrows, a passage is made by which the ransomed shall return. Call it not death; call it an exodus—a mighty deliverance of the people of God."

Then Elias: "O Son of God, right well do I know that the strength of one man may be made the strength of many; and the triumph of many may spring from the victory of one. I myself have stood alone in the face of an opposing people; yet by the strength of God I came off conqueror, and many were persuaded to cry, 'The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God,' and the power yet remains in which I stood; it glows, and grows within thee; it floods the air; it streams down thy garments. Fear not! thou shalt bring many souls, not merely to assent to the truth, but to the Truth itself. And especially standing conqueror over death, thou shalt deliver them who were all their lives in bondage through the fear of the same. The love of God shall uphold thee; the strength of God be thine."

Then Jesus: "In the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God."

Then Moses might continue: "Death is our best friend—he strengthens our eyes to behold the glory which in the flesh it would blind us to see. Once I was afraid to behold the glory of God. I

stood in a cleft of the rock, covered, as He passed by—but now, now, I can bear to stand and gaze in the presence of my King."

Then Elias would reply: "I too knew what it was to be afraid of His glory; in the mountain I wrapped my face in my mantle, but when His swift messengers came to bear me home, I cast my mantle behind, in token that I would never need it to shroud my face again. It is the same for Thee—already that glory smites upon Thy forehead, and gilds Thy garments, and floods Thy face with light, but beyond, beyond, Thou shalt be crowned with glory and honour."

And Jesus would say, "Thy will be done—Thy will be done."

Then Moses once more: "A mother has two kisses for her child: one, a daybreak kiss, wherewith she draws aside the curtains of the soul; and one a good-night kiss, sometimes given in the dark.

"And so hath the Eternal His two loves: the love in the light, which now encircles us; and the dark love on which our souls lean back to sleep. Those who have felt God's daylight kiss can trust

Him for it in the dark. For thee to die will only be to lie back in the Everlasting Arms."

Then Jesus: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

"And behold there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, and they spake of His exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

CHRIST WILL TAKE ALL

VIII

CHRIST WILL TAKE ALL

"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me."—JOHN vi. 37.

IF one were left to determine from our English Bible the meaning of this passage, it would be difficult to avoid the admission that it gives countenance to that form of doctrine commonly known as Calvinistic; for does it not present to us, in language sufficiently clear and obvious, the Divine Sovereignty as shown in Electing Grace? Must we not admit that there are those who by a Supreme Deed of Gift are allotted to the mercies of the Son; over whom He exercises the care of a good Shepherd; and is it not difficult to resist the conclusion that, as there are some who are the objects of special solicitude and care, so there are

those who in some degree lie outside the sphere of the Divine Benevolence?

Again, if we were to look at the 39th verse of this same chapter, and read the words, "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day," should we not say that the natural meaning of the passage is that there is a Doctrine of Final Perseverance, linked on to that of the Election of Grace, and a necessary corollary to it?

But when we turn to the Greek, we notice that in the first of the verses quoted the word *all* is in the neuter gender, and so does not necessarily apply to persons at all, and we are more likely to catch the true meaning of the words by reading it as follows: "Everything that the Father hath given Me shall come to Me"; and in the other passage a similar correction must be made, as is otherwise evident from the last part of the passage, "I will raise *it* up at the last day"; "Of everything which the Father hath given Me I should lose nothing."

Viewed in this light, the words that were

supposed to imply election teach consecration, and instead of final perseverance we read full possession. And this we do not say with any idea of refuting Calvinistic doctrine, having no "isms" of our own and little time to spend in attacking those of other people. Likely enough, our rendering of the words may be incorrect, and in any case we ought carefully to compare similar passages in the Gospel; but be that as it may, the truth is not affected that the Sovereignty of God and the Love of God demand the full subjection and surrender of our being; and we are assured that where these conditions are fulfilled, the Divine Possession and Protection become an intense and abiding reality.

Now, in confirmation of our rendering, we will examine the manner in which the passage is quoted by John Bunyan; and certainly we may say that if there was a Calvinistic meaning to be got out of a passage, John Bunyan was not the man to miss it; and moreover, since he was totally ignorant of Greek (and I suppose of Latin, too, there being only, as far as I know, the solitary expression in the *Pilgrim's Progress* "de carne et

sanguine Christi," accompanied by the marginal modesty, "the Latin I borrow"), he is not likely to fall into the mistake to which we may be liable, of evading the plain meaning of words by reference to the original tongue. Turning, then, to the *Holy War*, we shall find the following, giving an account of terms proposed by Diabolus for the surrender of the town of Mansoul; the offer of submission being made through his ambassador, Mr. Loth-to-Stoop. "Then Mr. Loth-to-Stoop said again, 'Sir, behold the condescension of my master! He says that he will be content if he may but have some place assigned to him in Mansoul as a place to live in privately, and you shall be lord of all the rest!' Then said the Golden Prince, 'All that the father giveth me shall come to me, and of all that he giveth me I will lose nothing, no, not an hoof or an hair. I will not, therefore, grant him, no, not the least corner in Mansoul to dwell in. I will have it all to myself.'" It is a little singular, to say the least, that he should have apprehended both the passages that we quoted in their right sense; and we had better attribute his accuracy to a touch of true inspiration.

Now, passing on from this point, we may think of the Lord Jesus in a twofold character :—

1. As the Receiver appointed to collect debts due to God.

2. As the Almoner of gifts from God to men.

He can come to us and say, "My Father has appointed Me the heir of all things ; He has put His affairs into My hands, so that debts to Him are debts to Me ; how much, therefore, owest thou to thy Lord ? For, all that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me."

He can come to us again and say, "The Father hath given Me authority over all flesh, that I should impart as well as exact ; that I may give eternal life and eternal blessing, and Holy Ghost to as many as believe ; that I should manifest His name to you, and give to you His word and His Glory, and all things I have received of Him ; that I should give unto you rest and My own joy, and, by way of legacy in a will which the enemy cannot dispute, should leave peace with you ; finally, ascending up on high, should send gifts to men, even to the rebellious, that the Lord their God might dwell among them. For He that spared

not His own Son, but delivered Him up for you all, how shall He not with Him also freely give you all things. How much, therefore, hast thou received from thy Lord?"

And if we look at it rightly, He speaks but little of the dues, and much of the gifts; for God only exacts from us that He may be able to impart to us; there is no tyrant seated on the throne of the universe, but only a Father waiting to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; and the uttermost farthing that He demands from us is only in order that He may have the right to save us to the uttermost, if we could but believe it.

We may say next, that if our ultimate condition must be that of entire subjection and surrender to and harmony with the Divine Will, how sad it is that our consecration is so slow, so protracted, so ungracious; that we take so much time to reach the point where we are altogether the Lord's. People can read the mystery of conversion in the parable of the dry bones in Ezekiel; but there is consecration in the story, too. Little by little we see the dead man coming into the place of blessing; bone to bone, sinew to sinew, nerve

to nerve; and when there is the complete structure of a man, comes the vivifying breath from the four winds. Not before, for God must have a man to quicken; He does not inspire skeletons or fragments; as at the first, when a man stands before Him, He breathes into him the breath of life and he becomes a living soul.

We may well be ashamed when we think of the way in which consecration to God is made. We are like the man who, because he was irritated at a claim made upon him for a sum of money, went and paid the bill in farthings. So we pay our dues to God, giving as little as we can, and taking as long about it as we list. Perhaps it is because we treat Him that way, that God is obliged to appear exacting and talk to us about uttermost farthings at all.

Perhaps we shall be right in concluding from the 39th verse, that there is something in the resurrection contingent on the consecration: "I will raise *it* up at the last day"; of one thing we may be very sure, that the life to come is not only conterminous with but continuous with the life that is. Death changes our surroundings but not

our characters. There is no more breach of continuity in those than there is in an algebraical curve that goes to infinity.

We may, indeed, get dying grace, and hold a consecration meeting upon our dying beds, but it is not death that consecrates, nor the grave that sanctifies and cleanses from all sin. We shall begin the next life pretty much where we left off in this. We were singing a little while ago—

> Let the veil become more thin,
> Let the glory pierce between;

but, mark you, that veil does not become more thin by pulling out a thread here and a thread there; remember how at the Crucifixion the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; the veil that is on your heart will go like that, when the day comes for things to appear which now are numbered amongst things not seen as yet, and for you to apprehend and participate in the things which God has laid up for those who love Him.

STRONG CRYING

IX

STRONG CRYING

"The energised prayer of a righteous man is of great force."—JAMES v. 16.

IT is strange that we understand so little about prayer: with most people, including the greater part of the professedly religious, it is regarded simply as a sort of spiritual safety-valve, adapted to relieve the soul from strain and over-pressure; is any afflicted, they say, let him pray; and as for us, who are merry, we will sing psalms.

Now, if we were looking at a steam-engine, and meditating over the motive power of it, we should scarcely direct our thoughts to the safety-valve, or say of it, "What a mighty power is stored up in this little lever." On the contrary, our attention would be fixed on the piston and the steam at the

back of it, and on the laws which govern its production, expansion, and condensation. And we need scarcely say that there is not much in common between those who regard prayer simply as an emotional safety-valve, and those who look upon it as one of the great moving forces of the spiritual world. It happens often enough that there are forces in the world of which people generally are ignorant, or of which they have an idea that is totally inadequate. As, for instance, we have known cynical politicians deride the expression of public opinion, as being only valuable as a political safety-valve, and useful to keep the "many-headed monster," the populace, from more dangerous courses; but not once or twice have they been awakened to find that there is nothing to stand before the rush of a well-formed public sentiment. So that we say rightly public opinion is of great force.

And certainly the idea which the majority of folk attach to the word prayer is but very incommensurate to the part which it occupies, not only in the development of the life of the individual soul, but in the life and lot of the world at large.

On the other hand, the force of prayer has been understood by the really spiritual writers of every school and of all time. They knew that prayer is one of the secrets of life; that he who lives, prays, and he who prays, lives; that he who prays works, and he who works prays; and so large a part of the spiritual life is comprised in the one word prayer, that we find them describing the soul's advance by the character of the prayer which springs from it.

For instance, Madame Guyon, in her precious A B C of the spiritual life, introduces her book with the title, "A Short and Easy Method of Prayer"; St. Theresa describes the degrees of the soul's progress as degrees of prayer, styling them Prayer of Quiet, Prayer of Union, and so on; St. John of the Cross names his mystical way as the Ascent of Mount Carmel, the meaning of which is evidently similar to the other. And so, no doubt one might give other instances, confining ourselves, of course, to the experimental Christians only, and letting the divines and theologians alone. May we not say that our dear Lord Himself was careful enough both in example and teaching to lead

His scholars along this way, making them aware that a great part of the soul's education was education in prayer? He began by making them feel that they really didn't know what prayer meant, though they had been taught to say prayers almost since they could speak. So He brings them to a point where they say, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples": encourages them further by admonitions to ask, seek, and knock; He tells them that if they ask for bread and fish, they won't get stones and snakes (but doesn't say that if you ask for a snake, your Father will be so good as to give it to you); leads them on until they acquire the sense of the need of a larger faith; instructs them that prayer is the function of an organ of the spiritual life, and must be as constant and persistent as breathing or other natural functions, so that men ought always to pray and not to faint, and that they should keep awake at all times praying, if they are to be found worthy to stand before the Son of man. Finally, one of His last counsels, just before the last great objective teaching of His own Life on the subject, connects the force of their prayer with the state of their life,

saying, "If ye abide in Me, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."

Now the verse which we quoted at the beginning speaks of certain prayers as of great force; we infer that there are weak prayers as well as strong ones—poor little wingless things that cannot rise into the Celestial Audience-Chamber.

Hermas describes such when he says, "The prayer of a sad man has no power to climb to the altar of God." And it is of great importance that we should know the reasons which contribute to the strength or weakness of a prayer. On such points we shall find the Apostle James to be an authority; for he was the great intercessor of the early Church, the man of whom they said that his knees were worn hard like the knees of a camel. And being in addition the most practical of all the teachers, we shall find in his writing (in spite of the fact that Luther called it an "epistle of straw") something far more valuable than a merely speculative theology. For instance, more than any one else, he supplies us with conditions for the success of that great experiment which we call prayer. Prayer of the powerful, operative sort, has its con-

ditions. We cannot disregard them. I have seen a man in the Cavendish laboratory attempt to make a magnetic measurement in the immediate vicinity of some large iron pipes, and neither of us could tell the cause which made the apparatus behave so unreasonably. And prayers are often hindered in a similar way by unobserved disturbing causes. St. James supplies us with several hints :—

(i.) That a double-minded man need not expect to receive anything from the Lord ; a waverer, driven with the wind and tossed.

(ii.) That ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

(iii.) That it must be believing prayer, if it is to be effectual ; let him ask in faith ; the prayer of faith shall save the sick.

(iv.) It is the prayer that springs from a rectified heart and life ; the prayer of a righteous man is of great force.

Hermas, too, a Christian father of the second century, whom we quoted before, supplies us with

some suggestions. One would almost think, for some reasons, that he had been one of St. James's immediate disciples, for he is fond of using that same word double-minded (more exactly double-souled), speaks of visiting the orphans and widows, etc. Thus we find in the ninth chapter of the book of Commands as follows (the book being of a date immediately subsequent to the apostles): "He said unto me, put away from thee all double-mindedness, and have no more division of heart concerning petitions from God, saying in thyself, How shall I be able to ask and receive anything from the Lord, having sinned so greatly against Him? Reason not on this wise, but turn to the Lord with all thy heart, and ask from Him without hesitation, and thou shalt know His large-heartedness, that He will certainly never leave thee, but will fulfil thy soul's request. God is not, as men are, mindful of wrongs done to Him, but forgetful of them, and He hath compassion upon His workmanship. Do thou, therefore, cleanse thy heart from all the vanities of this age, and from things spoken of before, and ask from the Lord and thou shalt receive all things; and of all

thy petitions thou shalt not fail of one, if thou ask of the Lord with an unhesitating heart. But if thou doubtest in thy heart, thou shalt receive none of thy petitions. For they that are doubtful towards God, are the double-minded men, and they shall obtain none at all of their petitions. But they that are perfectly sound in the faith ask for all things in reliance upon the Lord, and receive them, because they ask without hesitation and with no dividedness of heart. For every double-minded man, unless he repent, will scarcely be saved. Cleanse, therefore, thy heart from double-mindedness, and put on faith, for she is mighty, and believe in God, that thou shalt receive all thy requests that thou dost make. And if ever when thou hast made request thou be somewhat longer in receiving thy petition from the Lord, be not of a double-mind, that thou didst not swiftly receive thy soul's request, for certainly it is on account of some temptation or some sin that thou art longer in receiving thy petition. Therefore, do not cease making thy request, and thou shalt receive it, but if thou faintest and art of doubtful mind in thy petition, blame thyself and not Him who gives to

thee." It amounts to this, that to have power in prayer is only possible as long as and in proportion as we walk with God.

Looking at it in another light, observe that real prayer is connected in a most intimate manner with the influences of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this is what is meant by the word rendered by us "energised," but "effectual and fervent" in the English Version. Certainly in almost every case where the word occurs, it has reference to the operation of God or the devil. And if this be so, the prayer must be a possessed prayer, and the praying man a possessed person, and so again we are brought face to face with the foundations of mighty prayer lying in a holy life. And what else is taught by the Apostle when he says, "The Spirit maketh intercession *in the Saints* according to the will of God"?

THE SENTINEL OF THE HEART

X

THE SENTINEL OF THE HEART

"The peace of God, which exceeds all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."—PHIL. iv. 7.

ONE of the best tests of the value of a religion, and of the degree of the truth enshrined therein, is found in the nature and permanence of the peace which it imparts. For it is a fact that all religions, or almost all, and especially those which have taken a wide grasp of the hearts and minds of men, profess to bring peace to the worshipper.

The Roman Church, with its history unparalleled alike for saintliness or sin, with its offers to resolve all doubts and to forgive all iniquities, affords a haven and anchorage for those whose bark has been torn by the stormy winds of private judgment. It is not one or two who have been

brought within her pale in search of peace; and, indeed, the bosom of Mother Church would be an attractive resting-place, if it did not strike us on the other hand as being too much like the effort of one baby to carry another of its own size.

What is true of the Roman Church is true of the religion which has prevailed even more widely amongst the human race; if we ask the Buddhist teachers what is offered to the inquiring soul in their sacred books, or what is revealed as possible in the experience of those men amongst them who have made the greatest progress in mind-and-spirit lore, they would talk to you of Nirvana, or, as I think it was understood by them at the first, the extinction of the individual, even as a candle-flame is blown out. And however perverted their belief may have become, they seem in early days to have contemplated a real destruction of self,—the flame of self-love and self-life being so put out that it should never more be a flame, and should not long be a spark. For instance, their writings tell us such things as follow:—

"To him who has finished the path and passed beyond sorrow, who has freed himself on every

side, and thrown away all fetters, there is no more fever of grief." "Such an one remains like the broad earth unvexed; like the pillar of the city gate, unmoved; like a pellucid lake, unruffled."

"Tranquil is the mind, tranquil the words and the deeds, of him who is thus set at rest and made free by wisdom." "The heart, scrupulously avoiding all idle dissipation, diligently applying itself to the holy law of Buddha, letting go all lust, and consequent disappointment, fixed and unchangeable, enters on Nirvana."

And so in many other features we may trace the doctrine of inward peace as taught in the Buddhist religion. A similar feature is to be traced in the Mohammedan faith, if we are right that Islam means surrender to the will of God, and the Mussulman a surrendered person; and certainly there have been those in the great religion of the East who held surrender in a higher sense than that of the fatalism which we generally attach to the words.

Now, when we speak of different religions as in the foregoing, it is not that we want to cultivate the science of comparative religious anatomy; all

we want to say is this, that just as a very rough observation convinces us that corresponding organs in different creatures imply corresponding uses and similar needs, so we discern various methods of bringing peace to the soul of man in those religions which have to the greatest extent prevailed in the world.

We are right to read these features carefully, for they are the watermarks of the absolute religion (which we believe the religion of Jesus to be), which is to gather in the men of every tribe and kindred and nation, and to unite all the children of God who are scattered abroad.

We are too much accustomed to look on these foreign religionists merely in the light of compassion, as people for whom we must send the missionary, make the regular collection and offer the periodic prayer; and we make maps of the world in which we paint in all the religions which differ from our own in black, or, if not in black, in other colours only for the sake of distinction. But, if we were wise, we should see that, where we paint black, it should be black with streaks of light; and we should learn, too, to see that our own faith would

need, if accurately represented, to be a white colour checked and streaked with spots of the intensest black. For not all that is called Christianity is of Christ.

We say, then, that one of the characteristics of the absolute religion is that it offers to the soul a real and permanent peace. Here is a test for us: a real peace; it must not be based on deceptive methods: a permanent peace, which neither things present can disturb, nor life nor death dispel. And the Lord Jesus, who has spoken of the heart of man as never man spake, made this one of the keystones of His teaching, as it was the corner-stone of His living.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will rest you."

"These things I have spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace."

And thus we hear our blessed Lord whispering to the world of to-day, a tired world from the first, but never so tired as now; through these lips comes God's answer to the cry of five hundred millions of Buddhists, of the millions of Islam, of the Romanist, the Mystic, the Quaker—to all, in one

breath, the message comes; yes, to me, even to me Thou speakest when the word is of that hidden lasting peace which Thou, Lord Jesus, canst bestow. And if it was a marvel that at Pentecost every man should hear in his own language the wonderful works of God, much more is it a marvel to speak to all hearts than to speak with all tongues.

And what is more than speech, even that which goes to the heart, is the action by which Thou, Lord, hast proved Thy speech. Thy life has given Thee the right to speak of what Thou givest as *Thy* peace. So quiet wast Thou that, but for the wrong-doers that crossed Thy path, Thou wouldst have seemed to be passionless; yea, some have even spoken of Thee as the "cold Galilean," because of the marvellous rest of Thy soul in Thy Father's arms.

Not only is it a test of the truth of a religion whether it imparts a real and permanent peace, but it is also a test of our attainment in the true religion, when we find it, for us to examine the depth and character of our peace.

We determine the religion of Jesus to be the Absolute Religion, because it imparts the highest

peace in the manner most suited to the soul of man, and most consistent with the character of God.

We verify our own position in the Life by the simple test of the experience of Peace which we enjoy.

It is easy to be tranquil under certain circumstances; and there are times when most of us perceive the connection between quiet and holiness. But then circumstances change, and what becomes of the peace? Drake and his men cross the isthmus of Panama, and from a peak they see below them the smiling ocean on the farther side; so fair and still it looked that it received the name of the Pacific Ocean; but then there were two things to be noticed: first, it was a fine day; next, they probably thought the sea the smoother because of the height from which they surveyed it. And it is easy to talk of peace on fine days, and when we are high up above trouble; but our test must be when we are in the midst of the waters, when the waves thereof roar and are troubled. Is it Pacific Ocean then; or do we find, as may be those early adventurers, that it was too

hastily named? Certain it is that many Christians are disappointed because they do not always realise the peace and blessedness of which sometimes they have glimpses and enjoyment.

It is our practical every-day test of our standing in grace; a man who is exploring an old well lowers a candle before him, knowing that where that can live, he can live; the Christian's test-flame is the peace of God; when that fails, he ought to know that it is safe to go no farther. This peace is like some magic mirror, by the dimness growing on the surface of which we may discern the breath of an unclean spirit that would work us ill. As the Apostle says, "Let the peace of God rule (*i.e.* be arbiter or umpire) in your hearts." We may almost say that for most of us it is true that what we can do quietly we can do safely. So we see more and more the importance of having the heart and thought kept by the Peace of God.

Some render the passage, "The peace of God shall stand sentry over your heart"; and this expresses it very well. Where this sentry stands, nothing forbidden can pass either within or without, except the watcher be first destroyed. If the

thirst for wealth or fame enter into a man's heart, it is over the slain body of the sentry ; our peace is gone when these things enter in. And many such like things there are which choke the word and destroy the peace. Then we turn and look at it in another light, passing on from thoughts concerning the Peace of God to higher ones about the God of Peace, who has promised to sanctify us wholly and to preserve spirit, soul, and body blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THY FATHER IN SECRET

XI

THY FATHER IN SECRET

"Alone, and yet not alone."—JOHN xvi. 32.

OF all religious ideas, the grandest is that which lay at the root of the monastic system,—that religion is the wedlock of the soul to God; although the method in which this idea was exemplified was a faulty one, or, at any rate, one which rapidly became corrupt, even if it was not so at first. The wonderful worship of the middle ages at least taught men to serve God in retirement of life and unworldliness of spirit, and gave demonstration of holiness and righteousness in men who did their work in the world even though they lived out of it, and in women who were content to view the busy, jocular, combatant, pleasure-seeking community only from behind the bars of

the house of rest that they had chosen. It was a noble object-lesson of the spiritual life ; and though the symbols used to express it may have become valueless, the truth that they taught remains yet, that if a man or woman seeks the highest good, there must be for such an isolation of the soul from the ordinary course of life and thought in the world around us ; we must afford ourselves facilities for a sacred loneliness with God.

It is interesting to notice that St. Luke, probably more than any other evangelist, gives record of solitariness and vigil and secret communion ; and it may be that it was a line of experience with which he was familiar ; certainly he was careful to chronicle the lonely hours of the Saint when God and the soul are at one, and it needs no prophet to pray that the Lord will open the young man's eyes that he may see. What a summary of experience is contained in those words which describe the ministerial preparation of John the Baptist,—" He was in the desert until the day of his showing unto Israel, waxing and growing strong in spirit " (Luke i. 80). Then he speaks of the Master, of His being led by the Spirit into

the wilderness (Luke iv. 1) ; of His departing and going into a desert place (Luke iv. 42) ; of His withdrawal into the wilderness for prayer (Luke v. 16); of His going out into a mountain to pray, and continuing all night in prayer to God (Luke vi. 12).

Would it not be better, instead of making the commonplace assertion that there was nothing of the ascetic about Jesus Christ, for us to recall to mind His teaching at another time, that every disciple shall be perfected as his Master (Luke vi. 40), and to inquire whether we might not do well to love and covet retirement, even of an external character, as a means to the attainment of that perfection?

Retirement with God is the only preparation for success, and the only medicine for failure whether it be Moses wondering at the burning bush in the mount of God, or Elijah eating angel's bread under the juniper-tree. We shall do well to observe also that it has been a feature of all the great religions of the East ; the secret of all strong souls lies in those times of loneliness when they were bound hand and foot as captives to the Everlasting Will. We deride such nowadays ; call

them mystic, contemplationist, fanatic. George Fox, sitting about in lonely places, reading his Bible in hollow trees, is hard to understand. But if it were anything but religion that was in quest, people would not laugh. Tell them of Demosthenes living in a cellar, with head half shaved to prevent his appearing in public, and there will be admiration; was it any wonder that he became an orator? But let a man be as bent on becoming a saint; let him give up one hour's frivolous talk in order to commune with his Father in secret; then we suspect that such an one is becoming righteous overmuch. Mind, no one complains of a man being anxious to be wise overmuch, or rich overmuch, healthy overmuch; he may burn the midnight oil and study, watch the markets and scheme, frequent the gymnasium and develop his muscle, and no one will find fault; but to spend time on what is at least as important as wisdom, wealth, and health, and in a sense involves them all,—this is fanatical, and not to be encouraged or approved. We miss much through our want of separation from the world, and through our deficiency in insulation, or, which is the same

word, in isolation. If we go into a science laboratory and examine the great brass machines for holding electrical charges, we find that they are all mounted on glass feet. These are the insulators, and if it were not for them, no electricity would remain on the surface; as it is, electricity is hard enough to keep in charge, even with the best insulators. And we know sometimes what it is to have life and power pass into us from above, but we don't know how to retain it, because we have never learnt true retirement of heart and insulation of life. There is good teaching in the following passage from one of Madame Guyon's letters: "It is very desirable, and in the earlier part of your ministry especially, that you should spend a portion of your time—and that perhaps not a small portion—with God in retirement. Let your own soul be first filled with God's spirit, and then and not otherwise will you be in a situation to communicate the Divine fulness to others. No man can give what he has not; or if a man has grace, but has it in a small degree, he may in dispensing to others impart to them what is necessary for himself."

Now if any one were to ask what is the especial strength of England as regards other empires and commonwealths, the answer would be that it lies in her insular position,—in the "silver streak" that parts her from France; and the true Christian is girt round with separating grace.

We might draw two pictures to remind us how we may become strong for God: one of the solitary vigil of the Great Shepherd keeping watch over His flock by night; the other of the little company who waited with joined hands and hearts in the upper room for the coming of the Comforter; these two pictures representing the solitude of a single soul and of united souls with God.

By such silent communion God will especially prepare us for service and for suffering.

Some one spoke to John Nelson, making unfavourable comparison of John Wesley with a prominent religious teacher of the day; and Nelson replied, "He has not stayed in the upper room like John Wesley." We need our silent preparations for speech; to go forth, like Ezekiel, into the plain to find the glory of the Lord; or like Daniel to the river-side, where we may meet one like unto

the Son of man ; or like the two who walked into the country whom Jesus met, and with whom He talked till He made their hearts burn.

Especial preparation of this kind is necessary for the prosecution of great enterprises. We are reminded of this if we observe what followed the all-night of prayer of the Lord Jesus,—how, when it was day, He called unto Him His twelve apostles, and with them went down into the plain to heal diseases and them that were vexed with unclean spirits. Napoleon leaves his army, as they near the Russian frontier, and spurs his horse until at last in solitary contemplation he sees before him the river that separates him from the country that he is going to invade : a striking picture, made more so by the thought of the luckless termination of the enterprise. And some of us, whom God will call to great enterprises for Him that will not end in failure, will know what it is to make a similar solitary advance ; and in silent waiting upon God to watch Him unroll before us the map of our journey, telling us what we must do and what we must suffer for Him : and the silence makes us strong when the voice

of God has broken in upon it. And we will not marvel if to us, as to Saul of Tarsus, the answer to the question, "What wilt thou have me to do?" should come in the form, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer"; for our thoughts will turn again to Him who said, "Rise and let us be going" from the solitude of the upper room to the deeper retirement of the olive grove; who went a little farther, even from those He loved most, as He prayed, "Not My will but Thine be done"; and then took His way alone, and yet not alone, to be the Redeemer and Reviver of the souls of men.

TESTS OF FAITH, LOVE, AND RIGHTNESS

XII

TESTS OF FAITH, LOVE, AND RIGHTNESS

WHAT are the experimental bases of our Christianity? and whereby shall we know that we are of the truth and assure our hearts before Him?

Our answers to such questions may appear discouraging, but it is far better that we should experience discouragement (not that we would really wish to say a word to throw back the weakest believer from his faith), than that we should attempt to fill ourselves with the formulas that the Pharisees do eat.

Some time ago, in discussing the definite points and peculiar characteristics of Christian life and experiences, we took as a comparison the changes of state in a material body, from solid to liquid,

and from liquid to gaseous. We observed that, just as in nature the most important practical and theoretical investigations were made upon bodies in the neighbourhood of those points where they undergo a change of state, so it is also true in the world of grace that our most valuable observations and inquiries relate to certain critical points in the life—as conversion and sanctification; points which may sometimes, like the freezing and boiling points of a material substance, approach almost, if not quite, to coincidence, but which, like them, may be very widely separated.

Suppose, then, to resume our figure, we were to propose to ourselves the question, "How shall I know whether a body near the melting point has passed from the solid to the liquid state?" In some cases it would be extremely easy to give an answer: with ice, under ordinary circumstances, we should simply say that it becomes mobile; the word of the Supreme Law having gone forth, the waters flow. But our test would not do for all liquids, because there are some that do not answer readily to it, but are extremely sluggish in the neighbourhood of their melting points, so that they

seem almost solid even when liquid. We are obliged, then, to look for a better test, and we should probably observe that the most convenient would be found in the fact that an addition of heat produces a change in temperature in a body that has passed its melting point. Place a thermometer in melting snow, it marks zero until the snow is really melted, and after that it rises.

Now, in a similar manner, we should find that many of the tests popularly applied to discriminate spiritual life, are only partially accurate; and since our method is a purely experimental one, we ought to see that we apply proper methods of inquiry in an accurate manner.

Our question, then, is, "Whereby shall we know that we are of the truth?" and we shall probably look to Scripture for an answer. Indeed there is a School which tells us positively that we must try the condition in which we are by the statements of Scripture, holding up the Word of Life as a mirror before our lives, so that we may compare the reflection with the Divine characteristics.

And provided this method be honestly applied and not by the mere selection of pet texts, it

is probable that it is a correct one. We will, then, take the 1st Epistle of John, in which we find the most definite assertions about personal experience, and try ourselves by it.

First of all, there is the simple and beautiful statement, "Beloved, now are we the children of God"; most of us would quote it freely; but our scientific method would at least require that we should harmonise the supposed fact with the asserted consequences, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not"; and if we find that the world smiles on us in a way that it did not upon our Lord, then we must either conclude (i.) that we were mistaken in the fact, or (ii.) that while the word *we* in the first part of the sentence is capable of extension, the *us* in the second is restricted in its reference to St. John and the despised and rejected people with him—with, perhaps, a possible reference to subsequent isolated instances, down to the Salvation Army, and a few more in our own day!

Or, taking another simple assertion, "We know that we have passed (crossed over, transmigrated) from death unto life." We use the words to con-

vince people of the definite nature of conversion ; we say it is as real as a passage from death to life, and as truly marked ; it is the advent of a new life in the soul. But can we honestly go on to base the assertion on the fact of our own love to men, to—souls? Would we venture to stand or fall by this test, "I have loved, I love," and not be afraid that our good angels would rise up to bear witness against us as we said it?

A third passage comes before us ; for some one will say, "We believe, and is it not written that he that believeth hath everlasting life?" and may we not rest upon the assurance conveyed by the present tense of the verb employed?

Without going at present into the consideration of this passage from the Gospel, let us say, roughly, that the test of the existence of a spiritual life presented by St. John in the Epistle is of a threefold character: it is—

(*a*) A test of faith: he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

(*β*) A test of love: he that loveth is born of God.

(*γ*) A test of righteousness: every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.

And if these are true criteria of the life within us, each of these statements, with its necessary consequences, may be predicated of that soul in which the Heavenly Life has been brought forth.

For instance: we must not take (α) and reject (β) and (γ); nor must we disregard the consequences which are a necessary part of our experimental verifications.

Of these three passages we should most probably elect to be tried by (α); for it is comparatively easy for us, especially at the present day, to hold to an intellectual assent to a proposition. In fact the difficulty is that the sieve is too wide; for almost every one believes that Jesus is the Christ. It must be evident then that we have misunderstood the text or omitted the consequences which follow from it. Now the continuation of the statement is that whatsoever is in this holy birth has victory over the world; and if we apply the test of an overcoming life to our supposed faith, things look very different. Discouraged, we pass on to the second criterion: if not by faith, let us be judged by love.

Since we all of us love something and some

persons, we shall perhaps find ourselves safe under this test.

But, upon examination, we perceive that he does not simply mean love of God, or love of Jesus, or a merely selective human love; but love of the brethren and of the children of God in a universal manner. He twists it backwards and forwards, saying at one moment, "He that loveth God, let him love his brother also"; at another, "If he love not his brother whom he hath seen, how *can* he love God whom he hath not seen"? and again, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God," and, breaking off abruptly, "when we love God, and keep His commandments." Certainly if love is universal and coincident with obedience, we shall scarcely be able to face this test.

So we pass on to the third criterion—that of righteousness; and here, perhaps, we may expect some help, knowing how careful the Lord is to judge us by the light we have, how generously He measures every effort after holiness, and blesses every pang of the spiritual hunger. We may not be able to grasp the creeds which others recite so

fluently ; we may not be able to give easy expression to the affections which thrill within us ; may, perhaps, wonder if we love at all ; but at least we can say this,—we want to be right. But then we are confronted with the difficulty that what God means is not that we should want to be right, but that we should be right. He explains and characterises the spiritual birth by the words of the Apostle, " He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as Christ is righteous." " He that is born of God doth not sin." " Every one that is born of Him sinneth not." It almost seems as if the Apostle of Love had been remetamorphosed into the Son of Thunder, and were calling down fire from heaven upon us to devour us. And do not let us say that this is merely St. John's extravagant way of preaching holiness ; for it is the language in which the teachers of the time generally held and transmitted the Christian doctrine. Thus Ignatius, writing to the Ephesians, adopts the three tests of faith and love and righteousness : " No man professing the faith sinneth ; nor does he who professeth love, hate ; the tree is known by its fruits ; so, likewise, those who

profess to be Christ's shall be seen from their deeds."

And Polycarp presents the life-criteria in the same manner: "You shall be built up in the faith which is given to you: before which is love to God and to Christ and to the neighbour; for he who has love is far from all sin." And so we might multiply instances.

What shall we then say: Is a new Sinai set up on the square of the New Jerusalem? or is it a sense of good things not seen as yet that makes us cry, "Search me, O God; . . . and see if there be any lack of faith or love or righteousness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"?

THE ETERNAL IDEA

XIII

THE ETERNAL IDEA

"See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the Mount."—HEB. viii. 5.

WHEN we speak of a pattern, we generally understand by it some temporary or partial representation of an idea that is to be or has been realised —such as the plan of a house, or the mould of a casting, or, to take a more definite illustration, like the little silver models of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, or the carved wooden lions which are sold in the shops in the neighbourhood of the Lion Monument at Lucerne. In these last two instances we see that the greater is made the pattern of the less; and it is important for us to remember this; we are not to suppose that God showed to Moses a diminutive tabernacle, a sort

of doll's house, in accordance with which he was to construct his house of skins, or that He impressed upon him the nature of the priestly and sacrificial worship by altars and offerings of a lower degree, of small quantities. It is more like what Philo explained it to be, that the outer world is fashioned upon the model of the World of Ideas whose centre is the Divine Word ; or like Swedenborg's Doctrine of Correspondence, by which we may learn

> Cup, column, candlestick,
> All temporal things related royally,
> And patterns of what shall be in the Mount.

But, to get a more simple and exact idea, let us observe the means which those who have studied the heavens have taken to illustrate astronomical facts. There is an astronomical toy called the orrery, which can be made, by proper mechanism, to represent, with tolerable accuracy, the actual motions of the planets in their orbits, and which can serve to illustrate the phenomena which from time to time occur in the heavens. Now the tabernacle of Moses is precisely like this ; it is a religious orrery, a means of representing religious

truths and bringing home religious facts to the consciousness of those who are unable to study the skies and the lunar and planetary theories for themselves. But no one who wishes to be a real astronomer would be content with winding up the orrery and watching the balls go round ; he would know that the heavens must be studied for themselves, if one was ever to understand them accurately : and no one who wishes to be more than moderately religious can remain satisfied with the meagre assistance obtained by ritual and externalism.

We observe, too, that no one who wished to chronicle fresh facts would go to the orrery to learn them. He would, for instance, turn his spectroscope on the sun, and not on the great ball which represents it in the mechanism, if he wanted to determine the constituents of that great luminary. And let us remember that we shall never get at any fresh religious truth by means of ritual ; the proper destination of all orreries, religious or otherwise, is the museum. But meanwhile the heavens still go round, which are the work of Thy fingers ; and the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, can still be studied, even when all

the imitations of the universe have been swept away. We desire for ourselves an emancipation from all that is merely traditional in the religious life; we would refer back our lives to the original thought of God concerning them. Our life needs emendation, which can only take place satisfactorily by reference to the original design. We are often perplexed in our study of Scripture, by various readings and incorrect texts, and we wish that we could attain to something like the possession of an exact copy, if it were only of a single gospel. We read of Tischendorf finding the precious Codex in the monastery on Mount Sinai, and cannot forbear wishing that, perhaps, in some of the waste places of the East, there might be found a copy, not of the fourth or fifth century, but, if possible, of the first.

Suppose, for example, that a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, signed with his own hand, should come into our possession, in which it should be stated that "I, Matthew, sometime a tax-gatherer for the Romans, and now a collector of dues for the Almighty, and one of them that are set to ask, 'How much owest thou unto my Lord?' have

written this book, by the aid of the Holy Spirit; wherein may be heard many voices of the Lord; and lo! some of them have already come to pass, and the rest must shortly be done. And may the peace of him that wrote this book abide also with them that read." The supposition is not so very absurd, and if it could be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the learned (a people hard to persuade) that the Book and the hand were genuine, what a number of questions would be settled. An end would be made of all glosses and emendations of the text over which there have been so many disputes, and there would be an excision of all parts that have been added by later hands.

But we must admit that the corruptions of the sacred text are insignificant in comparison with the deviations that we find in our own lives from the original thought of God concerning us. Registered and chronicled in heaven is the mind and will of our Father about us; registered and chronicled also are the defects which have marred the handiwork of God in the soul. We do not always set out with the intention of spoiling our souls, and of keeping them from being holy books,

in which he that runs may read; but as a matter of fact what self writes in the margin soon creeps into the text; and what we write between the lines soon becomes a part of the manuscript.

> Let who says
> The soul's a clean white paper, rather say
> A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph,
> Defiled, erased, and covered by a monk's—
> . . . . . we may discern perhaps
> Some upstroke of an Alpha and Omega
> Expressing the Old Scripture.

But if we are to undergo a real emendation, it must be by detecting something more than an upstroke of the Divine Will; it must be by reference to the original plan of God, and by a surrender to the same.

In the chapels at the back of the choir of Cologne Cathedral are preserved the original parchments on which are drawn the plan of the great minster. All the centuries through which this building has been raising, the men that have been working at it have had in reverence the original thoughts of the master-minds at the first: and those who have been chosen to the superintendence

of the work have been men who were reckoned the most conversant with the laws of the Gothic architecture. One can imagine that Archbishop Englebert sleeps the more softly in his silver shrine because of the completed work of to-day. So we speak and think of a great stone-temple, the working out of an idea whose details were at first but scantily given, carried out in ages during which the master-minds that planned it could no more be consulted.

And yet when a greater and more perfect tabernacle is in building, not planned of mortal thought, and whose stones were too heavy to be moved by mortal hands, how little reference there is to the plan of the Founder, how few that are desirous of living according to the counsel and will of God, and to see in that will, not a mere legal skeleton of the structure, but a pattern, good and acceptable and perfect, with no detail wanting for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Alas! that our lives should be lived so much at random instead of being so fashioned that it might be said over the completed structure at the last, "Whose architect and craftsman is God." In

Christianity the ideal is to be the actual: there is to be no "shooting at the moon, because by that means you reach higher than by aiming at a tree" (a very doubtful statement even in mechanics); what God wants us to be that we must be; and if He says, "Be ye perfect," then let us go on to perfection and reach it. The Christian is called upon by his Master to live out and actualise God's ideal thought concerning him. Upon the map of his life is already marked out the road by which he is to reach the heavenly city; if, at least, he reaches it, as God intends, by the shortest way. There are no roundabout roads marked on the map in the Mount, and yet the Divine Plan of our life will be found inclusive of the minutest necessary details, just as an Ordnance map will tell you each feature of interest and importance as you go from place to place. It is of the utmost importance that we should take counsel's opinion about our lives, and that we should pray, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" that we should, if need be, weep much, until the Lamb shall take off the seals from that book of life, which, in the archives of the celestial city, is entitled "The Life of ——

taken from the Pattern in the Mount"; that we should learn to conform ourselves to the Divine original, just as a manuscript, however deformed by glosses and traditions, is accurately and certainly emended by the discovery of the original text; that we should know, in some sense, as Christ did, whence we come and whither we go; that, as He said, we also might feel that for this end we were born and for this purpose we came into the world, that we might bear witness to the truth; that, with Him, too, we might in some measure be able to say, "The son can do nothing but what he seeth the Father do"; and that at our ending it might be said, "He lived out the secret thought and counsel of the Almighty."

But in thinking of the pattern in the Mount as a pattern of life, it is important for us to see that, in the first instance, this thought was presented to us in connection with that side of life which we call worship; for there was to be a sanctuary made, etc., nor must we omit to get, with regard to our worship, a glimpse into the thought of God beforehand, consulting the oracle in advance as did men in the old days. We may not take

voyage without the very best map that can be had, lest we make shipwreck; nor, because we have not taken pains to obtain the map, may we content ourselves with creeping round shores that we know we ought to leave.

We must not separate the life from the worship; in fact they are one: we learn that from the description of the ceaseless adoration of those nearest the throne; they rest not day nor night saying, "Holy, holy, holy." Are we to suppose from this that their existence is occupied in the mere repetition of an everlasting Trisagion; or that, as Beecher once said, "they stand like wax candles round the throne, uttering an occasional Hallelujah"? Is it not rather God's way of showing us how He is unceasingly glorified in those who live nearest Him, whose lives worship Him?

The worship must be continuous with the life. I have a thermometer which has become perfectly useless because the air has broken up the continuity of the alcohol; it is worth next to nothing as an index of temperature. And little can we learn from any soul in which the continuity of the religious

life is broken, and which has become life streaked with worship.

Now let us learn one or two of the characteristics of a pure life-worship.

Out of the worship according to the pattern in the Mount all respectability has been differentiated : the Christian religion will not hold caste in solution ; it precipitates it to the bottom ; its founder died the death of a slave ; how could they give the slave a back seat after that? On the contrary, they gloried in the name ; Paul, a slave and an apostle ; a slave, and so eligible for the honour of crucifixion ; an apostle, and so sent with the good news of life. Respect of persons holds not in heaven ; none there will criticise the clay out of which the first raiment of your soul was made. What need is there, then, that we should leave off holding the faith of our Lord Jesus, with respect of persons (there are few churches where the ministers dare to preach on such a text as that). Let us have done with such classifications. In Jesus Christ there is neither barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, town nor university, but Christ is all, and in all.

We know, too, that the life-worship to which God calls us consists in abandonment and surrender to an animating, impelling spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy, and thou shalt be turned into another man. And it shall be, when these signs are come upon thee, that thou shalt do as occasion serve thee, for the Lord is with thee." "Whither the Spirit was to go, thither was their spirit to go." The highest life is one in which we realise not merely surrender to the Divine Will, but harmony with it, so that the rails on which the life moves, the human and Divine wills, become strictly parallel.

A surrendered life implies surrendered lips: this is the key of true worship; every one having a psalm, an interpretation; ye may all of you prophesy. The ideal worship becomes the actual when heaven touches earth, as on the day of Pentecost—they were all filled, and, by consequence, they all ran over. Who would venture to tell the woman who had been a sinner, that it was not seemly that her life should proclaim the *magnalia Dei*, the wonders of God; my lips, she says, have touched His feet, and are consecrated

for evermore. Who shall tell these prophesying handmaidens of the Lord that their place is in a different spiritual order: "Are there two inner courts, they will reply, to the New Jerusalem?"

> Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
> Cannot confound nor doubt Him, *nor deny*;
> Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
> Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

MORE LIGHT

XIV

MORE LIGHT

"Ye are the light of the world."—MATT. v. 14.

THERE is a great stir nowadays about improved methods of lighting our streets and houses. Men began with torches and pine splinters; then they advanced to candles and oil lamps; after that to coal gas; and now we are coming to electricity. In Paris they are experimenting with an electrical system, and we shall have it in England before long, the unmistakable cry of the natural world being "More light, more light."

A similar experience prevails in the spiritual life, whether we regard that life in the isolated individual, or fix our attention upon the dealings of God with the race of which we form a part. We need, in fact, an improved illumination. It is

plain that we do so. The light of Moses is not enough for us. His face shines indeed, but with a glory that fades away, so that he must put on a veil lest they should detect its evanescence. The prophets of old days are like the flight of meteors across the sky—very bright while they last, but no settled and abiding glory. John the Baptist is a burning and a shining lamp; but he says of himself, "I must decrease"; and with the words, "He must increase," we are pointed on to Christ, the true Light of the world, which if any man follow he shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life; who gives His own name and character to those whom He receives as disciples, telling them, "Let your light shine." And the individual soul begins with the glimmer of grace and the spark of a respondent love, and the operation of the Lord improves this little fitful glimmer, and develops it, until it becomes a clear and strong illumination, by which we may read something of the heart of God towards us, and understand that in the spiritual world, as in the natural, the order of this providence is, "More light, more light." Light, that we may know our way

more accurately; light, by which we may work; light, by which we may read; light, by which we may help others to walk and work and read; for "ye are the light of the world, and

> 'Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves.'"

God makes one man a lamp for another. Every saint should be like a cranny in the walls of heaven or translucent crystal in its foundations, letting the glory through. There is a glory within such a one, because God has shined in his heart: there is a glory without him, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon him. Not once nor twice has the Church historian to record, "They beheld his face, as it had been the face of an angel."

Now in any improved system of illumination we have a right to expect that one of its characteristics will be its capability for a general application. It must not be as great a blaze as one's eyes can bear in the principal thoroughfares, with thick darkness in the back streets and lanes. The improved light must become more sun-like, more

catholic, that is, more for everybody, must rise upon just and unjust; and while it participates in the universality of the sun, it must share also the steadiness of the stars. Such, too, must be the better life to which God calls us, not narrowing its sphere from day to day, nor fitful, like a star of the first magnitude at one moment and of the ninth a fortnight after, but burning with a steady patient zeal towards all men that God has made. The light of love will survive the light of enthusiasm, as Christ outlasts John the Baptist; enthusiasm must be swallowed up of love.

A lighted lamp is no respecter of persons; it shines in all directions and upon all people and things, being an imitation, within its measure, of the sun, concerning whom it is said, "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof." Is there this property of radiation about the light that God has given you? Have you learnt and practically entered into the truth that the supreme love is also the universal love, and that God is no respecter of persons? "It gives light unto all that are in the house": every soul truly won for God is marked with this token, "For the sake of

God and a perishing world." But perhaps you will say, "My light is so small that I cannot be a help or a witness to any; I have not light enough to show any the right way." Not so: a glow-worm in the hedge can tell a man which way to walk, if it will only shine. We may not all of us have the privilege of saying with John Wesley, "The world is my parish." Our parish may be small, and we may be lights indoors, shining for only one neglected soul in the house, or for young ones who have to be trained for the Lord, or for the men on our own staircase in college, or with whom we walk in afternoons.

They say the problem about the electric light is the difficulty of its subdivision, that is, of its multiplication; and in the spiritual world the corresponding necessity is to multiply and reproduce the image of God in Jesus Christ. There was a similar difficulty in the early days of photography; they could take one picture, but did not know how to produce copies from it. The Christian religion has in it the means of producing not only one Light of the world but many—a church of men and women of whom it may be

said, as to the disciples at the first, "Ye are the light of the world." But will something within us object and say, "Shining means burning up and burning out: the candle will grow shorter, and the battery weaker"? Now here we get at the root of the matter. Truly it is impossible to offer any real devotion to God, or perform any real service to man, unless we are willing to pay the cost. We are not to offer, either to God or man, of that which costs us nothing. The noblest thing in God's world is a lavished life; whereof God has given us plain proof in this—that "He so loved the world that He gave His Son"; and which Paul confirms as he says to some of those to whom he had been the means of bringing light, "I will most gladly spend and be spent for you." "I will burn up for you, and then when I am burnt out, I will be content with the mere candle-end of a life, extinct for the love of Jesus." And let us remember, too, that old proverb, that "You can't burn a candle at both ends." If our life has been lighted at one end for God, we must not burn it at the other for selfish enjoyments and ambitions. The work that God has called

you to do is a burner that will take all the gas that you can supply.

Now suppose that every time a candle is lighted here, a star were to shine out up yonder. How eager we should all be to make the face of heaven sparkle! we should take every candle and lamp that we could lay hands on, light them up, and watch for the gleaming of the new wonder in the sky. Does that seem strange? Did you never read that "They that are wise shall shine as the sun, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"? The lamps and candles in God's world do become suns and stars; the illumination that you will have by and by will depend on the little candle that you are to-day; and if you curtail your service for God and man down here, you will clip the wings and shear away the strength of the angel that you hope to be.

O Lord, that I could waste my life for others,
With no ends of my own!
That I could pour myself into my brothers,
And live for them alone!

OVER-OVERCOMING

XV

OVER-OVERCOMING

"We are more than conquerors."—ROMANS viii. 37.

THE Apostle coins a word to suit his experience. We should render it exactly by saying, "In these things we over-conquer," imitating the formation of similar words in our language, such as "over-master," "over-do." More forcibly we might say, "In all these things we over-overcome." Coverdale gives the sense of it well in his translation, "We conquer far." Observe some of the ways in which this excess and extravagance of victory may take place, for it is as if one should win a victory over a foe in such a way as to prevent him from ever troubling us again. Our conquest over special sin is to be of this character. We are not to be content with winning the field while the foe

retires to some more secure position from which he will have to be dislodged. It is never meant that we should sin the same sin twice, the Lord's purpose concerning us being shown in the Exodus of the children of Israel: "The Egyptians which ye see to-day, ye shall see them no more again for ever." "Let him that stole steal no more." "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." There is a passage in Miss Havergal's life which narrates how, after having been angry with a servant, the word of comfort came to her through a friend: "Perhaps this may be the last time that you will ever be so overcome."

And then our victories are to leave us stronger than before. This will seem quite contrary to the order of nature, in which seldom is there a battle without garments rolled in blood, and where the victory often costs as much to the victors as to the vanquished. A great general has said that nothing is half so terrible as a battle lost, except a battle gained. But to be more than conquerors! to rise the stronger for the strife even while we strive! this is what is involved in the Christian song of jubilee in the Eighth of Romans.

We over-overcome because of the completeness of the victory. In most campaigns it is by the balance of battles fought that the war is decided. Seldom does it happen that all the victory is on one side: and even then there will be virgin fortresses that never have been stormed, over which no alien flag has ever floated, which may be yielded indeed by treaty, but not taken by force. The over-conquering Christian can say with the invading Israelites, "There was not one city too strong for us: the Lord God delivered all unto us."

And in the strength of this I rode. . . .

. . . . . .

And brake through all, and in the strength of this come victor.

The triumphant scenes of the Apocalypse are not all future; but even now we know something of living and reigning with Christ in a fellowship above sin and above sorrow. For it was of sorrow rather than of sin that the Apostle was speaking. Our principle is one of holy indifference—an experience far removed from mere apathy. We do not simply say with Buddha that sorrow drops off

from him who has finished the path, as water drops from a lotus leaf. We are not sure whether the sorrows always do disappear from the burdened life like that. But when they do not so pass away, the drop is turned to honey in the cup of the flower; it is really the richer for its burden, and so may well be content.

And now how do we come to this place of triumph? By what means is it granted us to enter so fully into the songs which shall one day resound through the universe? "Through Him that loved us." It is alliance with God that is the secret. The three steps of the mystics are *Purification*, *Illumination*, and *Union*; and simple as the statement is, it is a better theology than many another of much larger dimensions. Many people do not understand this alliance in which we are led into union with God, through the Holy Spirit. They think it is more like the old story of the dwarf and the giant, who went a warfare together, in which expedition the dwarf lost his arms and legs, and was only saved from imminent death in each conflict by the happy arrival of the giant. One can scarcely blame the dwarf for

breaking up the partnership. We must understand that in Christianity the dwarf is the giant, that the despised deformed puny child of faith is, when he recognises his own weakness and leans upon his own God, big with the force that rolls the stars along. The might of God is in him: and though he may have no armour nor sword to match the Philistine, he will come home carrying his head for all that; for

> Man's weakness leaning upon God,
> Its end can never miss.

THE END

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